

Newtype

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VOLUME 03
NUMBER 02

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KINO'S JOURNEY
Episode 1

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The wacky world of Azumanga Daioh!

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SAMURAI 7 • PEACE MAKER Kurogane
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Behind the scenes with the
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METAL OF DISHONOR FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST

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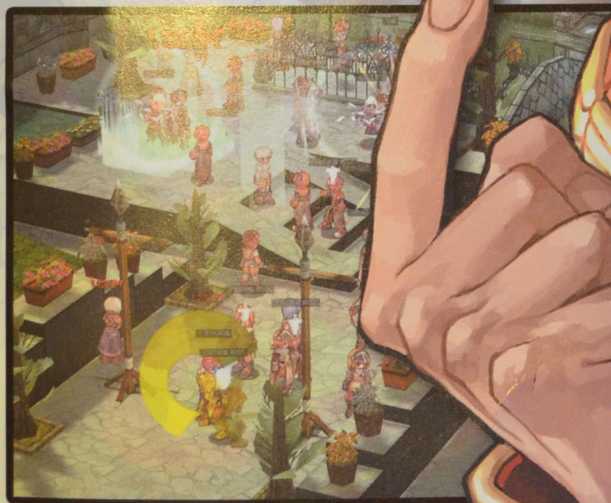
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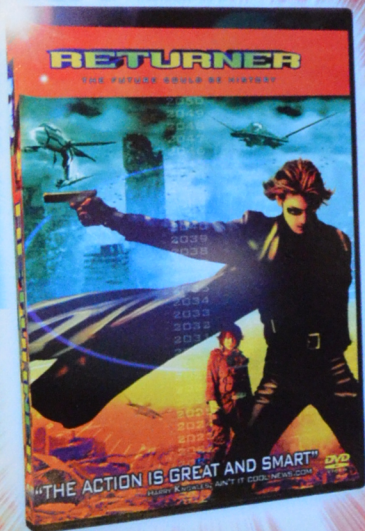


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**FULLMETAL
ALCHEMIST**

Metal of Dishonor

Seems like no good deed goes unpunished. The Elric brothers save their mother's life, but at the cost of their own bodies. An inside look at this coming-of-age anime imbued with magic and military mayhem. Character designer Yoshiyuki Ito offers his special insight on the characters, the creatures and the costume design.



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Oh, Bug Boy, when will you ever find love?

Kiddy Grade

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again.

Created and Directed by:
Keiji Goto (Martian Successor Nadesico,
Sorcerer Hunters & Gate Keepers)

Animation by: **GONZO**
(Hellsing, Full Metal Panic!, Vandread,
Gate Keepers & Last Exile.)



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Since our new editor in chief can't draw to save his life, he filled the final page with a heaping helping of text.



Cover: FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST
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NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

THE DIRECTORS' CUT

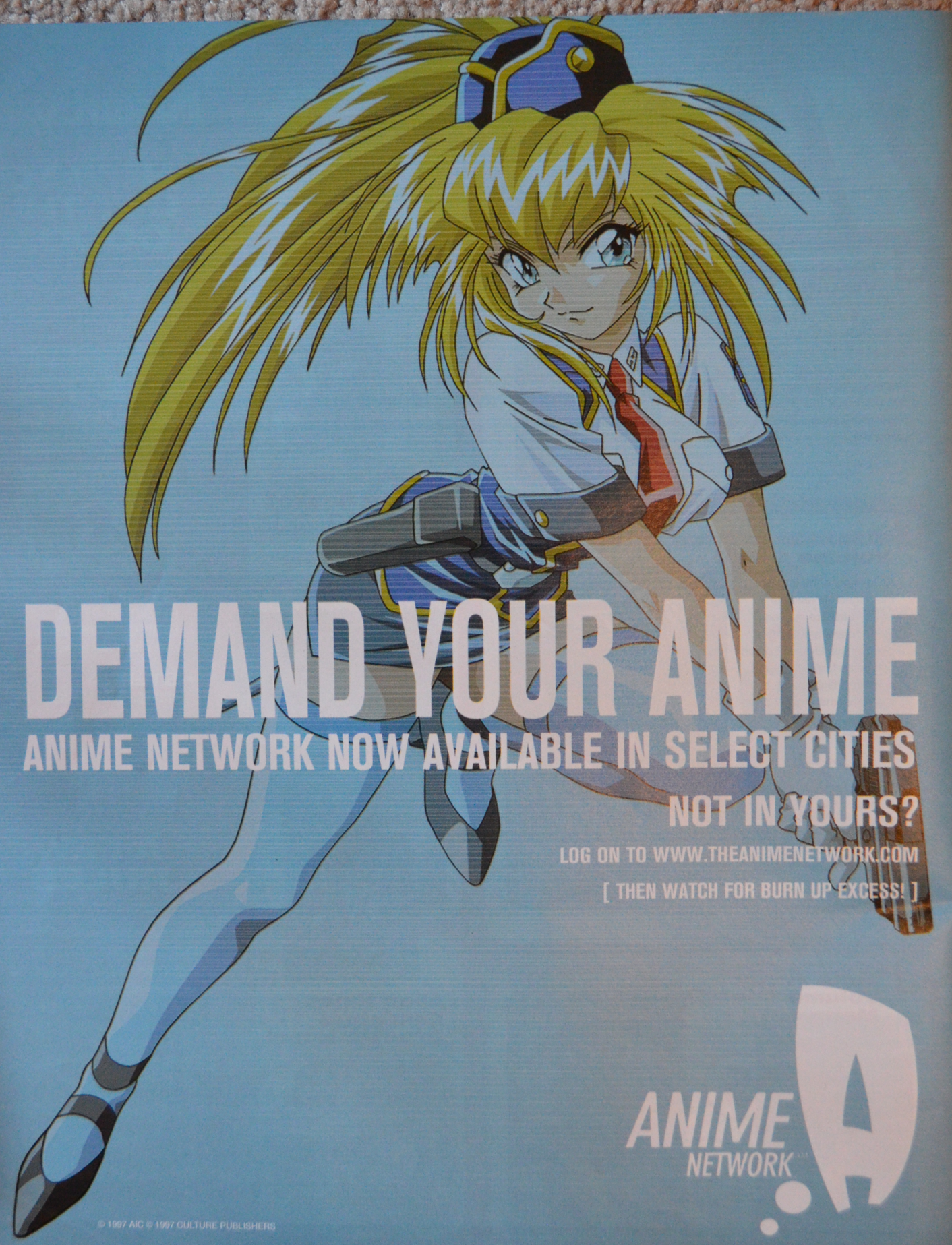
For the first time ever, experience director Hideaki Anno's true vision of anime's future in Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Directors' Cut. Features the final six episodes of this groundbreaking science-fiction series with scenes previously unavailable outside of Japan. Includes an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the Neon Genesis Evangelion live-action movie, courtesy of WETA Workshop (Lord of the Rings™).

Resurrection (Episodes 21-23): Available Now. Genesis Reborn (Episodes 24-26): Available 3.09.04.



www.advfirms.com

ADV915 NEON GENESIS EVANGELION © GAINAX / Project Eva • TV Tokyo

A detailed illustration of a blonde anime character with long, flowing hair, wearing a white short-sleeved shirt with a red tie, a blue skirt, and blue thigh-high stockings with black heels. She is holding a large, futuristic gun. The background is a solid light blue.

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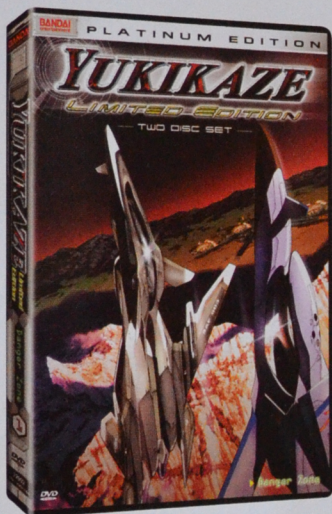


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I Yukikaze Limited Edition Volume 1 DVD

As lovingly chronicled in the pages of *Newtype USA*, *Yukikaze* is every fighter plane anime fan's dream. This Limited Edition combines fantastic extras, an official flight patch and the awesome artwork and intrigue of the anime. What more can you ask for?

5



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K Junk Force Volume 1 Manga

Scantly clad girls blow things up with tanks and machine guns in this 2004 manga from ComicsOne! Send in the card and prepare for chaos and sexually charged mass destruction!

5



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H Fruits Basket Volume 1 Manga

The kids are going crazy over *Fruits Basket*, Natsuki Takaya's popular comedy manga built around wacky hijinks and legends of the Chinese zodiac. Score a free copy of the first volume of the manga here!

5

© 2003 Natsuki Takaya



J Alien Nine: Emulators Graphic Novel

Hitoshi Tomizawa's story of sixth grade graduates who host alien life-forms! But beware, there's a new mysterious girl in town. Get a dose of this crazy tale for absolutely nothing!

5

Original Japanese version "Alien 9 The Emulators" © Hitoshi TOMIZAWA 2003 (Akita Publishing Co., Ltd.). English version ©2003 Central Park Media Corporation. All rights reserved.

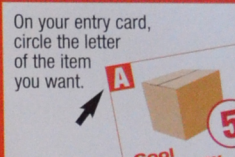
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Newtype USA

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GOTTA GET IT GIVEAWAY

A Yoshiyuki Tomino Autograph

What *Gundam* fan wouldn't want the autograph of the man behind the legacy? Tomino also sketched a small Haro underneath his name! So, get on it now and be revered by your sci-fi lovin' friends!

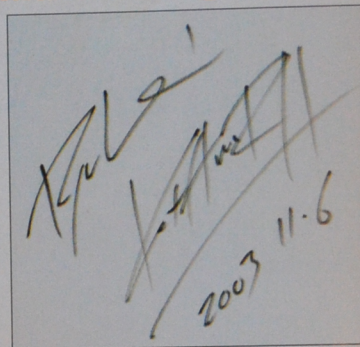
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B Ryuhei Kitamura Autograph

Director of *VERSUS* and *Azumi*, Ryuhei Kitamura is the cat's meow in Japan, and he's about to tackle Tinseltown in 2004. Be the first to score this potential worldwide celebrity's autograph from NTUSA!

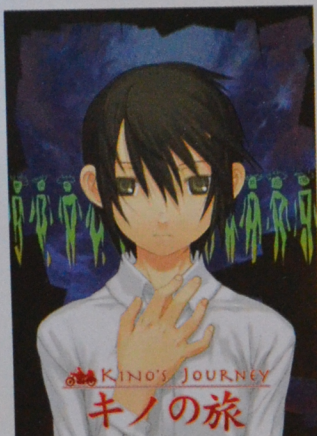
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C Kino's Journey Collector's Edition

Hop on the highway to anime hipness! Hook up with this first volume DVD along with a snazzy collector's box that holds the remainder of the series. This one's sure to appeal to fans that prefer anime both strange and thoughtful.

5



© Keiichi Sigsawa • Media Works / "Kino's Journey" Production Committee

Not final artwork—subject to change

D Autographed skyhigh Production Notes

A huge fold-out spread of production notes and photography from Ryuhei Kitamura's *skyhigh* entirely in Japanese. Fans of the cutting-edge director, take note: It's signed by the man himself!

1



E Neon Genesis Evangelion Original Soundtrack

You know you want to listen to the sounds of *Evangelion* on your morning drive while daydreaming about saving the world from the evolution of...no, the destruction of...no, the confines of religion...whatever. Relive the glorious confusion by marking this one on your giveaway card!

10



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F Bubblegum Crash: Total Crash Collection

These episodes, now collected on DVD, were the immediate follow up to the cyberpunk anime classic *Bubblegum Crisis*. Watch as the Knight Sabers continue their struggle against the Boomers and the Genom Corporation in MegaTokyo.

5



Graphic image provided courtesy of AnimEigo, Inc. © 2003 by AIC Inc.

A full-page illustration of Edward Elric from the anime Fullmetal Alchemist. He is shown from the waist up, wearing his signature grey alchemist's uniform with a black collar and a white scarf. His blonde hair is styled in a short, spiky cut with a small ponytail at the back. He has a determined, slightly mischievous expression on his face, with his mouth open in a small grin. His right arm is extended forward, and a bright blue lightning bolt is striking it. His left arm is bent, with his hand near his chest. The background is a dark, stormy sky with blue and white lightning bolts. The overall style is typical of anime art, with bold lines and vibrant colors.

Edward Elric

The older of the two brothers and a licensed alchemist, he doesn't like that he's small for his age. Both his right arm and left leg are artificial limbs, but he usually keeps them hidden. He and Alphonse are on a quest to find the Philosopher's Stone.

METAL OF DISHONOR

Reckless, the boys continue on their journey, bearing the weight of their crime

What's not to like about **FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST**? It's about young boys coming of age, which is about the most orthodox theme out there. And this show takes on that theme without looking back!

Character designer Yoshiyuki Ito says, "I had wanted to animate a story like this." He is the one who pushed for this title to be produced as an animation. Since he's both a designer and a fan, we asked him to explain the main character Edward's charm.

"To tell you the truth, of all the characters, Ed was the toughest to design."

That's because Ed is rich in emotion, and his facial expressions often change. All the funny faces you see in the original manga are retained in the anime. In addition, "Behind that bright expression of his, there's something [painful] that he's [silently] enduring." This delicate emotion needs to be shown in the anime as well.

"I guess Ed's charm is the whole package—both his comical side and his dark fate."

Ed would normally be a cheerful and active boy, but in the past he performed a taboo ritual in order to bring his mother back to life. As a result, his brother's entire body and even parts of his own were lost. He's now a nationally licensed alchemist and has sold his freedom to the army. In other words, Ed's nature contains elements of both light and dark. Through various experiences, he grows into a more intriguing and thoughtful man.

"A brat grows up," Ito explains.

"You shouldn't miss seeing how that happens."

The story of Ed's growth develops by showing a mixture of his past and present. As the show progresses, he becomes more appealing as a character, so don't miss a single episode!

FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST

● CURRENTLY AIRING ON TV IN JAPAN.
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▶ www.sonymusic.co.jp/Animation/hagaren/

illustrated by KAZUMI INADOME
finished by KOUICHI IWANAGA
background by KAZUYUKI HASHIMOTO (KUSANAGI)
text by DAISUKE HIRAKIDA

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STAFF creator: HIROMU ARAKAWA; director: SEIJI MIZUSHIMA; story editor: SHO AIKAWA; character design: YOSHIYUKI ITO; main animator: KOJI SUGIURA; production design: SHINJI ARAMAKI; art design: HIDEYASU NARITA; chimera design: JUNYA ISHIGAKI; art director: KAZUYUKI HASHIMOTO; color design: SHIHOKO NAKAYAMA; filming director: SUSUMU FUKUSHI; sound effects director: MASAFUMI MIMA; music: MICHIRU OSHIMA; production: MAINICHI BROADCAST, ANIPLEX & BONES

CAST Edward Elric: ROMI PARK; Alphonse Elric: RIE KUGIMIYA

STORY The Elric brothers tried to raise their mother from the dead using forbidden alchemy. Not only did they not revive their mother, but they also lost pieces of their natural bodies. After making up their minds to get back everything they lost, the brothers leave home in search of the Philosopher's Stone, saying goodbye to their childhood friends. At the recommendation of Colonel Roy Mustang, Ed takes an exam to become a licensed alchemist. Passing this exam will allow him to study more alchemy and hopefully gather hints about the stone's whereabouts.

Roy Mustang

In addition to being a colonel, he's also a licensed alchemist. Although he seems like little more than a lusty womanizer, he actually has other ambitions. He's the one who suggested that Ed join the army.

BIO OF A BOY ALCHEMIST

Ability

Through a combination of natural ability and tireless effort, Ed became the youngest licensed alchemist ever at the age of 12. His skills are superior to those of regular alchemists. He can perform incredible feats of alchemy directly by hand, without having to draw any alchemic signs. He makes it look so easy!

Background

Licensed alchemists belong to the army, and ordinary citizens fear them. As soon as war breaks out, they're called in whether they want to join the fight or not. Some people in the army understand the Elric brothers' situation and look out for them.

Character

Fearless and short-tempered, Ed cares for his brother more than anybody else. He never fails to challenge his fate—his strong will prevents him from giving up hope. He's still a teenager, though, so he sometimes attempts the impossible and ends up feeling impatient.

Alphonse Elric

Ed's younger brother is pure and kind. He lost his body in an alchemic ceremony, but thanks to his big brother, his soul remains in this armor. He feels enormous love and gratitude for his brother.

Riza Hawkeye

A clear-headed lieutenant with superior shooting skills, she's Colonel Mustang's right-hand man. She understands his ambition and is willing to cooperate with him.



↑ The sun goddess Leto is engraved on the giant relief in the nave of the serene and glorious chapel.



↑ The cathedral, which looks over the entire city, is the center of the community.



↑ An ominous mortuary lies beneath the cathedral.

← Water is abundant in Riote, even though it's located in the middle of the desert. Red wine flows from the fountain in the open square.

The scenery offers clues about the world of the show

The Elric brothers have been traveling around looking for information about the Philosopher's Stone. They stopped at Riote, a prosperous city in the middle of the desert with an abundant water supply. Its prosperity is due to a cult within the city that worships the sun goddess Leto, and the miracles of the goddess's self-proclaimed avatar Bishop Cornello. Or at least that's what the cult says...

Governed by the cult, the city of Riote is the setting for Episode 1. Throughout the city you can find religious iconography—magnificent cathedrals and ubiquitous statues of the sun goddess adorn the landscape. Hinting at Romanesque and Gothic styles, these are accompanied by an



↑ A bistro faces the open square. The radio on the awning plays religious broadcasts.

array of metal chimneys. Though there are modern conveniences such as electricity and even radios, the city's power is likely supplied by steam.



Bishop Cornello

He claims to be the avatar of the sun goddess Leto, and thereby gains the people's faith. His miracles, however, don't follow the principles of alchemy.

Rose Thomas

She lives in the hope of reviving her boyfriend. She devotes herself to Bishop Cornello and the cult, who promise the dead will be revived.

The Elric Brothers

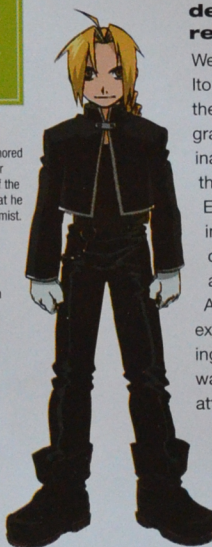
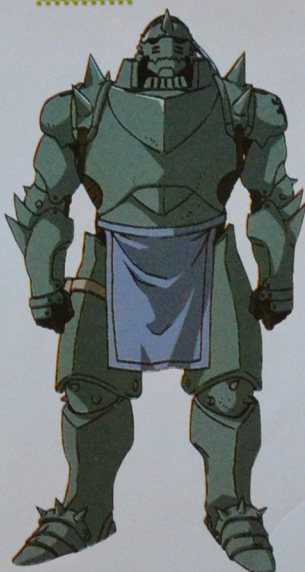
Elder brother Edward is short compared to his younger brother Alphonse, who's in a giant suit of armor. People often think Alphonse is the "Fullmetal Alchemist" because of the armor, but in fact it's Edward.

Ed

A stylish long-sleeved black jacket and slacks hide his armored artificial arm and leg. A silver watch, attached to the end of the chain on his belt, is proof that he is a nationally licensed alchemist.

Al

Alphonse's soul inhabits a bulky suit of armor. He carries chalk in the pouch on his thigh to draw alchemical signs. The crest on his shoulder armor is the same as the one on his brother's coat.



Various costume designs and the reasons behind them

We asked character designer Yoshiyuki Ito what he focused on as he designed the characters. "I tried to maintain the graphic image and setting of the original manga, and also applied that to the characters new to the anime."

Each character is distinctively dressed in costumes ranging from everyday clothes to army uniforms and even armor. It seems difficult to express Al's emotions, but Ito says, "I can express his emotion, even if he is wearing a suit of armor, and that's what I want to do in the show." The careful attention Ito gives each character is evident. He recalls that one of the few requests from creator Hiromu Arakawa was, "I'd be glad if you could maintain the balance of macho and middle-aged male [refinement]." With a smile on his face, Ito says, "I felt the same way, so the designing part was easy."

Ed
(back view of his coat)

The red of his coat contrasts with his black clothes. The crest on the back is the same as his brother's. Are the thick soles of his shoes meant to make him look taller?



Chimeras

In this story, chimeras are artificial creatures made by combining different animals using alchemy. Pay close attention to the creature designs by Junya Ishigaki, famous for his mecha designs.



↑ Ed's character is rich in facial expressions. Is he about to explode?



↑ Creating a weapon from cobblestones—ready to fight!



↑ Ed's strong will is reflected in his eyes.



↑ The pain the brothers endure is also an important theme.



↑ Brutal scenes like this will shock you.



↑ This shot clearly shows the height difference between the two brothers.



↑ An incredible alchemy scene with effects that can only be seen in anime!



→ Al's emotion is visible even through his iron mask.

An exciting combination of alchemy and hand-to-hand combat that pulls no punches!

This show has two TV trailers. The humorous 15-second version shows fast-paced action scenes and funny faces from Ed, while the serious 30-second version demonstrates the excitement of alchemy. They are both telling, as the show's action and excitement form a unique synergy. In fact, you can expect a heated battle between the Elric brothers and

chimeras in the very first episode. "Even the action sequence, which only lasts for one scene, will satisfy viewers," says BONES, the studio doing the production. PornoGraffiti's song "Melissa" was used for the trailers. Also, the opening theme has a fast tempo and somewhat melancholy sound, which truly complements **FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST**.

IN ARM'S REACH

What lies hidden in the world through which the Elric brothers travel? Let's go on a tour and learn all about it!

Riza Hawkeye

First Lieutenant Hawkeye is calm and dignified. She rarely changes her facial expression. Often misunderstood as a cold person, she's actually caring and kind.



Military Personnel

Colonel Mustang and Major Armstrong are career officers and nationally licensed alchemists. Naturally, they wear their uniforms on duty. Judging from First Lieutenant Hawkeye's attire, the female uniform seems to be the same as the male version.



Roy Mustang

He became a colonel at a young age, and the military uniform suits him well. Because he uses fire alchemy, his gloves are made of material that can be used to create fire.



Alex Louis Armstrong

This licensed alchemist is known all over as a very powerful man. He tends to take off his clothes and show off his muscles, but he is also soft-hearted and emotional.

Illustrated by YOSHIYUKI ITO
finished by SHIHOKO NAKAYAMA

R S E

Entering the foyer of the SUNRISE studio is like setting foot in a mini *Gundam* world. A trio of nearly human-sized Zaks stands guard; next to them is a cardboard cutout of a saluting Yumiko Shaku in Federation garb, promoting the latest PS2 game. Beautiful artwork by Yoshikazu Yasuhiko and Syd Mead adorn the wall, and an intricately detailed Gundam model is showcased. The iconic Mobile Suit's head graces both a plaque outside and the flags lining the streets of Kamiigusa, which have been coined "anime town." On the TV monitors, other titles including *Inu Yasha*, *The Big O* and *s-CRY-ed* run on a loop.

SUNRISE was founded by seven members from Osamu Tezuka's Mushi Production in 1972. President Takayuki Yoshii explains that it was initially set up as two separate entities: SUNRISE Studio was in charge of animation production while Soeisha handled the conceptual planning and rights. "Mushi Production was about to go bankrupt. The company president [Tezuka] was the creator, so all the energy went into production, and I think that as a result, the management wasn't quite up to scratch. If nothing else, SUNRISE was created after reflecting on and taking into account the mistakes of Mushi Pro. Basically, they wanted to keep some of Mushi Pro's aspirations while making a company that could operate as a business enterprise."



Yumiko Shaku as a Federation soldier promoting PS2 action game *Megurial Sora*, with three towering Zaku figures standing guard.



Yoshikazu Yasuhiko's *Gundam* art and Syd Mead's *Turn A Gundam* illustration are proudly displayed in the foyer.

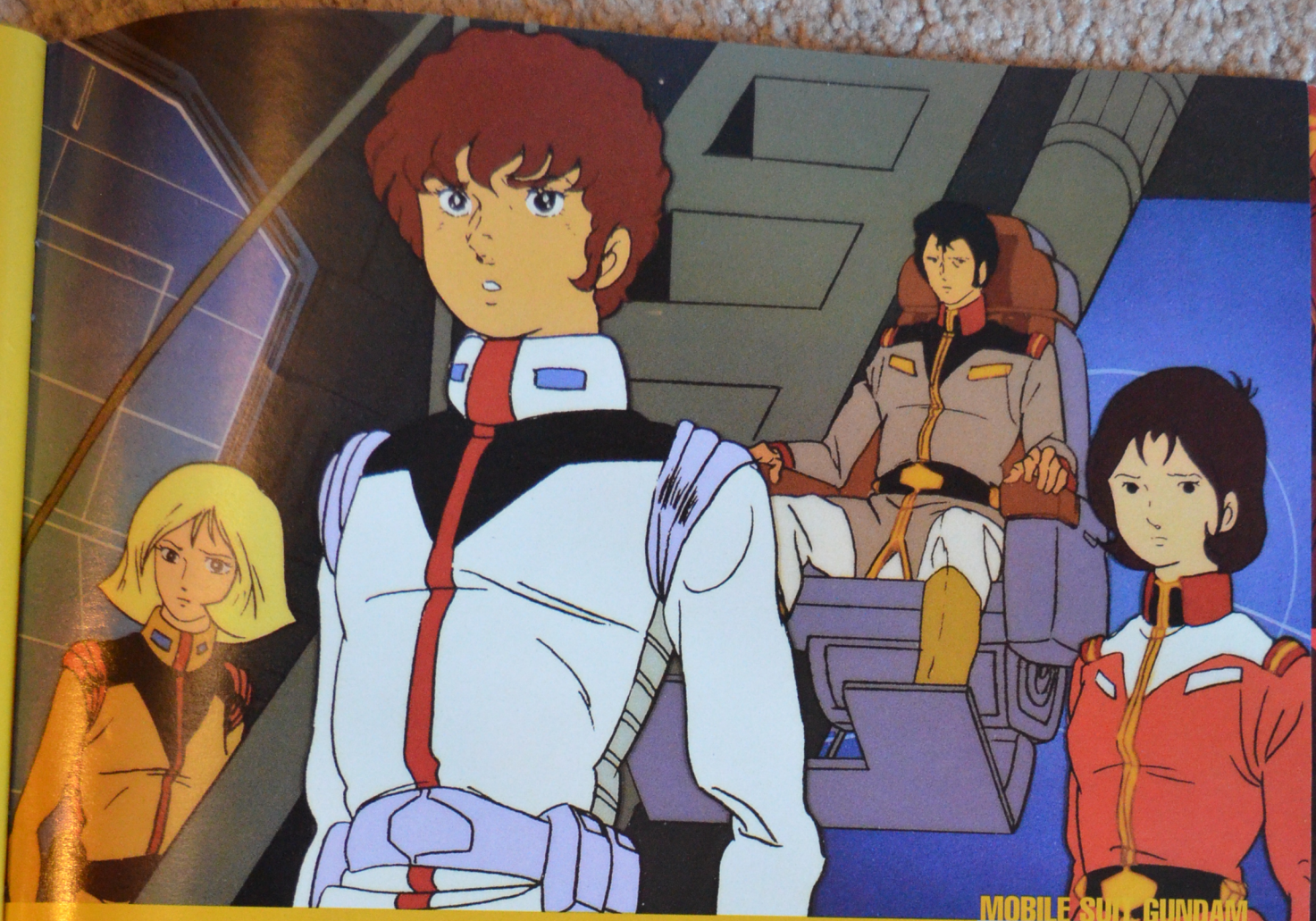


President Takayuki Yoshii
"I think I'd like to somehow
do *Crusher Joe* again."

President Takayuki Yoshii
and director Yoshiyuki
Tomino discuss the
changing climate of
anime production and
the legacy of *Gundam*.

[inside]

SUNRI



MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM

The Mobile Suit revolution

With SUNRISE's *Kido Senshi Gundam* (Mobile Suit Gundam"), Tomino sought to inject a serious sci-fi feel. In order to improve as a director, he decided to follow the giant robot show format, albeit with his own twist—which included the setting. "Space colonies hadn't been taken up much, even in general sci-fi movies [up to then]. I completely skipped anything about aliens and added the element of civil war." The size of the mecha was also scaled down. "These weren't things I thought of in order to make giant robot shows," Tomino stresses. It's no secret that he isn't particularly enamored with the robot genre.

"Each of these projects was, in the normal Japanese-language sense of the word, *gekiga* [dramatic movie], although that's difficult to translate into English. I'm someone who has no interest in anything other than making motion pictures as pure, ordinary entertainment."

"It portrayed robots in a whole new way," comments Yoshii about *Gundam*. From the mecha designs and their colors to the traditional episode structure of the genre (where evil had to be punished at the end),

he regards *Gundam* as the first to break free from the restrictive genre conditions imposed by the sponsors and TV stations. From a toy standpoint, he remarks that the Zaku design was impossible to make into a toy. Regarding Yasuhiko's character designs, he says, "They're pretty much all older boys and girls—adults, even Amuro. If we had been thinking about what the sponsors preferred then, those types of designs would never have appeared."

Indeed, Kunio Okawara's mono-eye design of the Zaku has arguably become more iconic for some fans than the Gundam itself. Questioned about the collaborative process of introducing a new level of mecha sophistication, Tomino says the distinctive visual feature was solely Okawara's idea. But when asked to create more Zeon mobile suits, the designer was stumped. "Do you know the Mobile Suit called the *Dom*?" Tomino asks us. "I was the one who drew the three views of that design—front, side, back." Later, while embellishing his autograph with a sketch of a bouncing Haro for the NTUSA giveaways, Tomino mentions that the mascot also came from him.

Regarded as an artistic landmark that spawned a multimedia phenomenon, *Gundam* may have been too far ahead of its time. Tomino says the industry response across the board during its original broadcast was a resounding...nothing. "And I mean *nothing*. The only words that ever came back to me were 'I don't get it'—and I got that all the time. And so the broadcast was terminated, cut off in the middle." Debuting in April of 1979, *Gundam* didn't stay on the air for a year as originally planned, due to poor ratings. The colony setting went way over people's heads in the first episode. Tomino recalls that the least understood aspect was the presence of solid ground in space.

It wouldn't be until the release of the movie editions two years later that *Gundam's* impact was duly acknowledged and its popularity really took off. "At a basic level, there is a concept that anime is for kids," says Yoshii of the medium's past. "But *Gundam* caught fire with junior high, high school and college students...it's true that it became a hit after the release of the movie, but even saying that, there were only a few million really enthusiastic fans." Along similar lines, he



Yoshiyuki Tomino

Father of *Gundam* and many of SUNRISE's classic works

points out that while Hayao Miyazaki's anime are now regarded as national works in Japan, it took ten years for him to be recognized throughout the world with *Mononoke Hime* ("Princess Mononoke") and for his previous works to become widely known. Anime, he opines, was a piece of Japanese culture that went unrecognized in society. "In a manner of speaking, the way people regard anime changed because of *Gundam*, and because of Miyazaki's anime too. *Gundam* is recognized as being [a part of our] culture [now]. It was a part of the very early days of modern animation."



CRUSHER JOE

Newtype USA

Early projects as a subcontractor included the super combining robot shows **Combattler V** and **Voltes V**, as well as the animated elements of Tsuburaya Production's **Kyoryu Tankentai Born Free**, which composited 2-D cel characters with live-action models and sets. After five years, the two companies merged to become Nippon SUNRISE, which is when Yoshii came on as a producer. During his dozen or so years prior to becoming president, he produced about a dozen titles, including the **Crusher Joe** movie as well as the **Dirty Pair** and **Cyber Formula** TV series. Among the company's many titles, he admits to having a soft spot for the works he produced. "I'm not very objective," Yoshii says with a smile. "**Crusher Joe** was the first work I did as a producer; Yoshikazu Yasuhiko was the director." He admits that he was inexperienced at the time and leaned heavily on Yasuhiko for support.

The first original work that put the company on the map was 1977's **Muteki Chojin Zanbot 3** ("Super Machine ZANBOT 3") directed by Yoshiyuki Tomino, who helmed many of SUNRISE's classic works such as **Aura Battler Dunbine**, **Space Runaway Ideon** and **Heavy Metal L-Gaim**. Tomino, also a veteran of Mushi Pro, directed episodes of **Tetsuwan Atom** ("Astro Boy") and **Ribbon no Kishi**. "Thirty or forty years ago, working in TV anime wasn't such a big job, so people who worked in the industry couldn't make a living just working for one production company at a time," he remarks of the early years. **Ashita no Joe** (Tokyo Movie) and **Casshan** (Tatsunoko Production) are just a couple of the other productions he was involved with as a freelancer. Busy with contract work—he likens the experience to a manual laborer getting paid by the day—he didn't have time to consider the work's cultural implications. "More and more people nowadays are starting to work for fun," he observes. "Hobbies are not work. There's too much of that kind of thinking being brought into the workplace, and of course anime is the same, but that's why Hollywood's big-name sci-fi movies are getting less and less interesting!"

Due to clashing philosophies early on between SUNRISE and himself, Tomino recalls that for the first year and a half, he couldn't get any work from the studio. "I was the kind of person who didn't like to do things by the book," he explains. Even after being invited to work there, his initial relationship with the producers at SUNRISE was "like oil and water. We didn't mix well at all."

mechanics, the Earth dwellers have advanced only as far as the biplane.

Much of the controversy revolved around the mecha by American illustrator and industrial designer Syd Mead, famous for his work on *Tron*, *Blade Runner* and *Aliens*. "Japanese designers had gotten to the point where they couldn't make anything that wasn't a copy of something else, and I felt like I needed to show a *Gundam* of a different kind," Tomino explains. He says SUNRISE eventually relented after their initial resistance.

"Putting aside whether this was a success or not, doing *Gundam* with Syd Mead's designs was a great contribution," says Yoshii. He adds that Mead, a very fast illustrator, had a great impact on SUNRISE and left a lasting impression. "But I have some questions about whether *Gundam* and Syd Mead's designs agreed."

"I don't think they were good designs," Tomino says after brief deliberation. "Ever since the time I received the designs I've felt that way. But they were different from what a Japanese person would draw, and I

recognized their value from that standpoint. With just that much, I was hoping the Japanese creators might be up in arms at least a little bit." He looks at a folder printed with Mead's schematics of *Turn A* and *Turn X*, brought along to the interview. "What I mean to say is that [those designs] had no popularity as *Gundam* [designs], but looking at them again, I have to say they were cool because Syd Mead drew them." Ultimately, Tomino suggests they are the kind of designs that aren't suited to being drawn by a Japanese animator, but they could have been pretty fantastic if realized in the live-action arena instead. Narratively speaking, he says the task of tying his previous *Gundam* projects into *Turn A*'s new vision was daunting, but to deny the past would have been wrong. "It's a story I can't turn down. I mean, there's such a thing as creating a worldview, right? That's what I challenged myself to do. And that much I feel I did very well, so it stays inside me as an experience that I would call very thrilling and exciting."



TURN A GUNDAM

Newtype USA

18



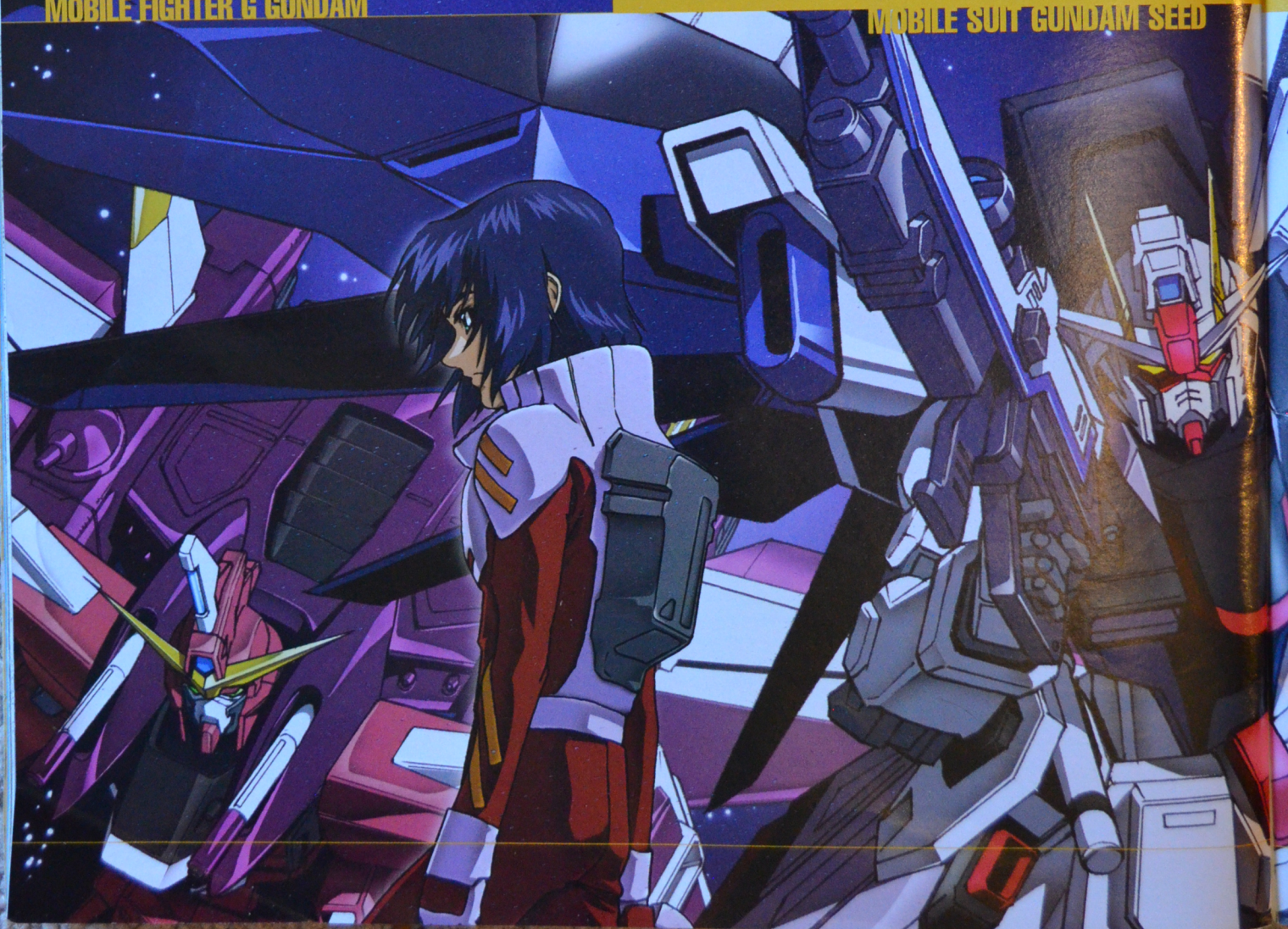
MOBILE FIGHTER G GUNDAM

The Gundam Universe

"The *Gundam* saga is a piece of history spanning 25 years," begins Yoshii about the challenges of creating sequels. "Naturally, people who saw it when they were ten are now 30 or older. We have to make new *Gundam* [shows] for new viewers." Fans embrace some *Gundam* shows more than others, and it's no different for Yoshii. "I was against this, but *Kido Butoden G Gundam* ("Mobile Fighter G Gundam") was made for those [new fans]. It is totally against the historical feeling of the *Gundam* saga—it was a martial arts version—so making that, in a way, was an adventure and was well-received by new fans." He also mentions the Hollywood live-action *G Saviour*. "That was also a challenge, deepening the historical feeling of the *Gundam* saga." Remarking that *Gundam SEED* hasn't been well received by the older Japanese fans, he feels that its success among the younger target audience is partially due to the incorporation of elements from popular live-action TV dramas. "That it has become such a big hit, I

think is probably due to the emotions of the young people today—[the show] matched their emotions. It just hooked them. Robot action naturally was a huge selling point, but even more than the robot action, we wrote it to focus on the characters."

The conversation shifts to *Turn A Gundam*, a show Tomino created for the 20th anniversary of *Gundam*. Tomino says the polarized reception to the show among fans and even the people involved gave him a sense of déjà vu. "At any rate, people who hate it really hate it. But of course, people who like it really like it. For me it's the same thing I felt during those three years around the time of the first *Gundam*—the sense I got when *Gundam* was rejected then." The story concerns a technologically advanced race from the moon that wishes to return to settle on their home planet, Earth. Conflict and political intrigue develop between them and Earth's current civilization, which was stripped of Mobile Suits and associated technology in a war thousands of years ago; in terms of



MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM SEED

Recent and coming attractions

After *Turn A Gundam*'s completion, Tomino experienced exhaustion and wanted to make something lighter in tone for his next work. Thus he created *Overman King Gainer* with the fundamental premise that he could make an entertaining show with robots that wasn't set in space. Complementing the tone, he included a memorable and humorous dance sequence of the cast and the Overman mecha in the opening credits. Of the main mecha's unique design (it sports what looks like dreadlocks and a zipper-like cockpit hatch), he remarks, "The concept of the 'Overman' is just a really, really stupid idea that doesn't even qualify as sci-fi, but the point is entertainment. If possible, I wanted to create a childish anime that even adults who were tired from work could enjoy. That's *Overman King Gainer*."

Yoshii discusses the research and development into 3-D CG that SUNRISE undertook during the course of producing *Gundam Evolve*, a series of experimental short 3-D films. "We wanted to challenge ourselves in various ways, to find out how we can express various things in CG," he says of the pilot films that have since been released as a collection. Also in the works is Katsuhiro Otomo's *Steam Boy*. "The most spectacular work of those in production now would be that project. We plan to be finished in a few months...but it's already been a few years since I said that it would be done in a few months!" he laughs. Of *PLANETES*, a warm and amusing story of space debris collectors, he says, "It's number one out of the current shows that started this autumn."

Changing times

Yoshii remarks that the anime industry is in a state of chaos and briefly explains the business models developed over the last three decades—models that have been slowly crumbling of late. "One was for TV stations to get high ratings—the project's goal was to grab a share of viewers." While adapting popular manga to anime is common practice to achieve that (as with the company's *City Hunter* and more recently, *Inu Yasha*), SUNRISE mainly created original works associated with various goods that bolstered the work and its characters. That was the second model—promoting goods from toy companies. *Gundam*, and more recently *Crush Gear Turbo*, are examples of this model. "We had all the rights to the shows, and in the past we controlled the future of the shows by ourselves. That was the key to our success." Works such as

Witch Hunter Robin, aimed at selling the show itself on video or DVD, constitute a third, more recent model.

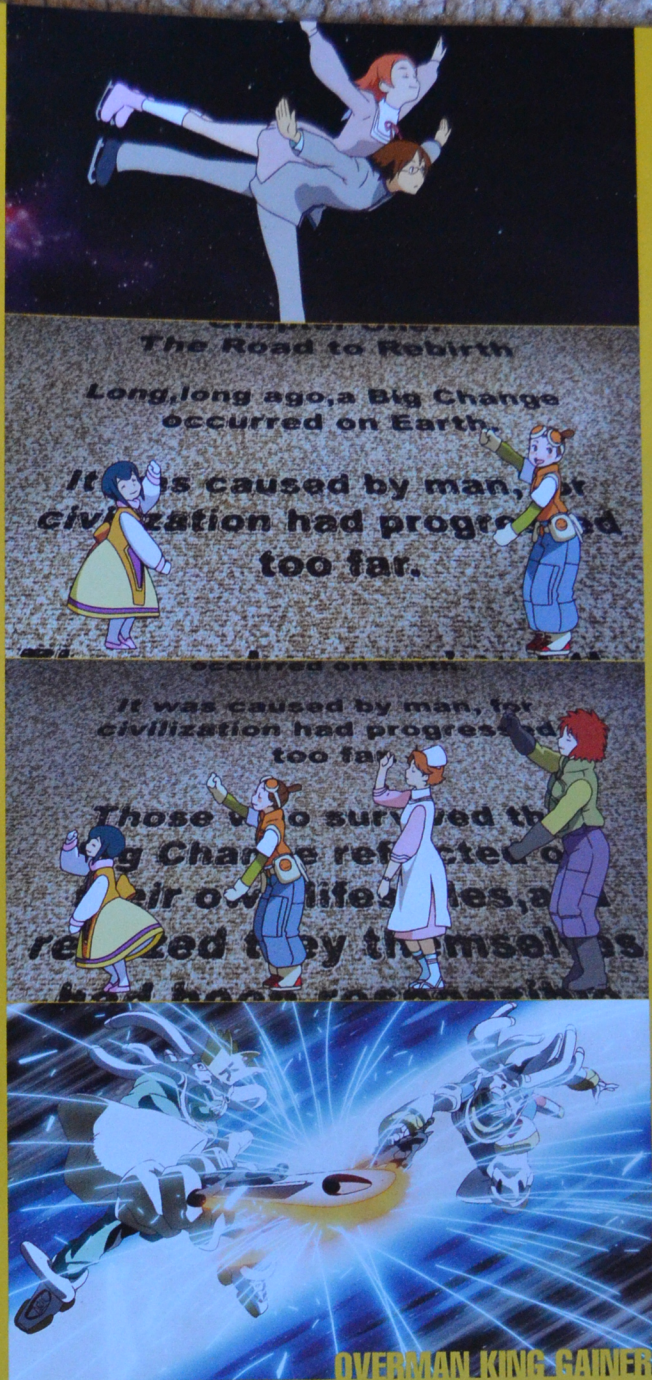
"Up till now, animated films were considered risky, so huge amounts of capital never flowed into this industry, but the rights business, the content [business] and the perceived value of anime has changed. What was once an object that people gambled on has now become culture, and the capital associated with this industry keeps increasing. And what happens when capital keeps flowing into the industry is that it becomes chaotic like it is now. The rights keep being dispersed. Because of that, multiple companies are providing money to just one show, so by the time it's finished, there's this structure where the products and the various copyright holders are all tangled together." Decreased profits have resulted in rivalry between major studios, plus new ones keep starting up. "The business model we've been using to make things for these last few decades wasn't perfect, but it was our custom, and now it's completely crumbled away."

As for the industry's future, he replies, "I can't predict it." In company terms however, Yoshii says his ideal would be to establish ten to twenty independent production studios under the SUNRISE banner. "To give birth to multiple independent producers with their own independent studios, where they'd make their own plans and produce them. Naturally there'd be [a core], like SUNRISE's DNA. That would probably be the perfect form for this company."

A matter of class

Tomino expects that anime will increasingly become a part of people's everyday lives and the business will continue to grow, yet he has reservations about its continued popularity among the majority. "This is something that pertains to staff issues as well, but the fact that digital technology has become this easy to work with, as well as financially cheap, means that anime is becoming more cheap and tawdry. I wonder whether that fact is connected to the expansion of the business. So what does all this mean, then? It means that unless we start raising some professionals—some people who will take a harder and more professional look at not just animation, but visual media—we'll end up falling out of favor."

Indeed more than a few examples of sub-par digital works litter the anime spectrum, but in the case of *Steam Boy*, Yoshii believes it represents progress on the visual front. "Quality in film, complexity and visual



[perfection]—we're always intently seeking that." It's such a huge production that if SUNRISE hadn't become involved with Studio 4°C, Yoshii suggests the project may not have been made.

"If you want to succeed through working in the visual media, then all you really need to do is create something that's just a little bit classy," Tomino opines. "That's something I will keep shooting for until the day I die; I want that to be a running theme in my work, so in the end, I'll probably keep right on doing animation work."

"There's just one thing about this that I don't want you to misunderstand," Tomino stresses. "It's a matter of language. The phrase *shumi no yoi* ['classy'] isn't anything like 'high quality' or even 'marvelous,' if you want to focus on the most flattering meaning of the word. It's not like 'fantasy' or 'fantastic' or anything like that. All it is, is just 'something good' from the perspective of entertainment. So in the end, it has to be fun. We can't neglect that fundamental part of what we do. Above all else, we must make something that people can enjoy."



Big One

This proud SDF vehicle is exclusive to the Sirius Squad. Despite its classic look, the interior is packed with super-modern gadgets. The first unit was destroyed during the rescue of the S50; this is the second unit.

Schwanhelt Bulge

A former subordinate of Manabu's father Wataru and the current Chief of the Sirius Squad, he tries to teach Manabu and the others what it means to be a member of the SDF, something he learned directly from Wataru.

David Young

As a member of Sirius Squad, he's an engineer in charge of navigation. Open and honest, he doesn't mind interacting with Manabu and the other rookies. He loves gambling and seems to have known Bruce for a long time.

Manabu Yuuki

His mixture of tenacity and tunnel vision sometimes leads to conflict with fellow members or even failure to accomplish his duties. But his dauntless courage and strong trust in his friends compensate for his shortcomings.

Louis Fort Drake

A rookie with great aptitude who started her career at the same time as Manabu, she's the radar operator of Sirius Squad. Cheerful and kind, she's a great athlete who graduated from the academy at the top of her class.

GINGA TETSUDO MONOGATARI

● CURRENTLY AIRING ON TV IN JAPAN

► www.galaxy-railways.tv/english/

illustrated by KEISUKE MASUNAGA

text by HIROTAKE KOGA

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STAFF creator, general setting & design: LEIJI MATSUMOTO; director: YUKIO NISHIMOTO; series organization: HIDEKI SONODA & RITSUKO HAYASAKA; character design: FUMITOMO KIZAKI & ITSUKO TAKEDA; music: NOZOMU AOKI; production: PLANET

CAST Manabu Yuuki: NAOKI YAHAGI; Louis Fort Drake: ASAMI SANADA; Bruce J. Speed: TAKEHITO KOYASU; David Young: HIKARU MIDORIKAWA; Sexaroid Yuki: NAOKO SUZUKI; Schwanhelt Bulge: AKIO OTSUKA; Layla Destiny Shula: YOKO ASAGAMI

STORY The Galaxy Railways connect planets across the galaxy. Manabu Yuuki follows in the footsteps of his late father and brother in joining the Space Defense Force (SDF), which ensures the safety of the Galaxy Railways. Performing his duties forces him to grow up.

FORGE YOUR OWN PATH!

Encouraging the young men and women who are trying to find their own paths

The infinitely broad universe—this vast and mysterious notion fascinates everyone on some level. For protagonist Manabu Yuuki, thoughts go beyond mere fascination and into the realm of dreams. His father, Wataru, was the Chief of the Sirius Squad on the Space Defense Force (SDF), which ensures the safety of the Galaxy Railways. The SDF has earned the admiration of many young boys and girls, including Manabu. Out of respect for his father and his chosen profession, Manabu is even more drawn to space.

Despite these aspirations, Manabu's life has been harsh. His father was killed in the line of duty during an attack by an unidentified spaceship. And though his brother Mamoru also joined the Space Panzer Grenadiers (SPG) of the SDF only to face an untimely death, Manabu, instead of weak-mindedly blaming the SDF for the loss of his family, joins the organization.

Manabu's difficulties strongly reflect the prevalent motif in creator Leiji Matsumoto's works of young boys'

coming of age—also seen in the space drama *Ginga Tetsudo 999* ("Galaxy Express 999").

Matsumoto says, "There are many turning points throughout one's life, but no one knows when they will appear. In this show, I want to portray youngsters struggling to make decisions at critical junctures in their lives. Forge your own path in life! In other words, this show is my encouragement to the young."

And encouraging it should be, because Manabu never falters from his path. In joining the SDF, he's taken a gigantic step toward forging his own future.

Layla Destiny Shula

The very powerful woman who governs the Galaxy Railways, she's believed to have the special ability to foresee the future of people, animals and even planets. Moreover, she has another great hidden power.

Sexaroid Yuki

A female android in charge of first aid, she manages the crew's health using highly advanced medical technology. She's impartially kind to every member of the crew.

Bruce J. Speed

He's one of the top five members of the SDF at handling heavy firearms. He tends to be aloof in general, but for some reason, he's especially cold to Manabu.

Connections to Galaxy Express 999

Matsumoto's worlds come together!

The long-running *Galaxy Express 999* was and still is an amazing success. The TV series maintained high ratings throughout its entire 113-episode run, and reruns of the series still air in Japan. The 1979 film version was the number one Japanese film of the year.

The series depicts main character Tetsuro's growth through travel to foreign planets and interaction with locals, accompanied by his mysterious companion Maetel. Their travels, unlike in *Ginga Tetsudo Monogatari*, are limited to the rails of the space train 999. Matsumoto's latest

work follows the adventures of Manabu and the SDF, which monitors the entirety of the galaxy railway network. Matsumoto says, "The 999, Captain Herlock and Emeraldas all appear in the show, and each of their worlds is linked to this show's setting." In fact, both Tetsuro and Maetel appear in Episode 1. Using *Galaxy Express 999* as a framework, this show connects the entire Matsumoto world.



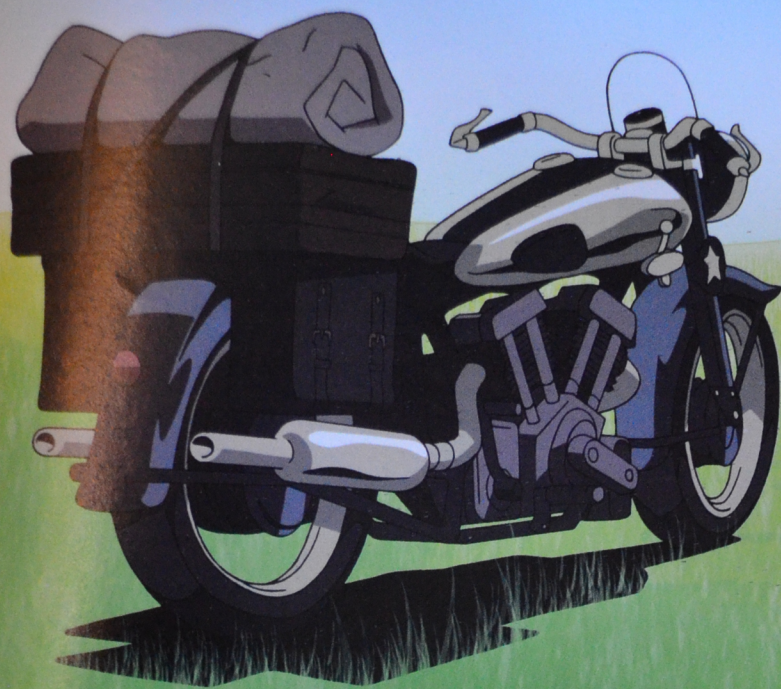


KINO'S JOURNEY

● ORIGINALLY AIRED ON TV IN JAPAN.
VOLUME 1 AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 2004 IN THE US FROM ADV FILMS
► www.kinosjourney.com/

text by PAT YEN

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The Long and Winding Road

Symbolically, or as a means to an end, journey has long been a great tool in the individual quest for self understanding. Whether through religious myths, fodder in pop songs, Jack Kerouac novels or stories of drunken rockers rampaging foreign hotels, there's suggested worth in the notion of packing up and hitting the road. In the adventure anime *Kino's Journey*, this theme is entertained. Mixing sci-fi and thoughtful philosophical musings, the anime hits the American DVD market this February. Neither falling into the category of previous counterculture motorcycle manga and anime such as Mikiya Mochizuki's *Wild 7*, nor allowing lazy comparison to the latter's Stateside brethren, the 1969 film *Easy Rider*, *Kino's Journey*, though employing certain thematic and visual cues from predecessors, stands as a unique addition to the myriad of anime titles available in the US. *Newtype USA* revisits this series for a few brief insights into its characters and themes.

Following the travels of Kino and the sentient motorbike, Hermes, the plot kicks off heavy on dialogue. Kino wanders the world staying in one place for only three days at a time.



Look for the first episode of *Kino's Journey* on this month's free DVD!

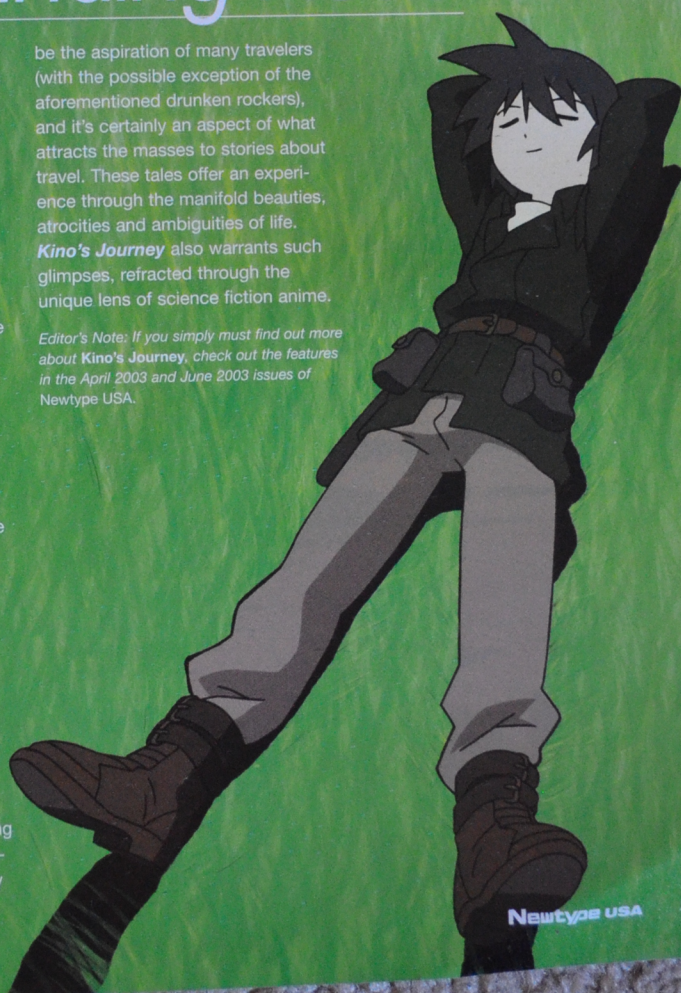
With wits, accrued wisdom and luck, the drifter is tempered by the cynical, though often reasonable, offerings of Hermes. (Eat your heart out *Knight*

Rider. This surreal talking cycle shares a name with the Greek god Hermes, based on the Egyptian god, Thoth—the founder of science

and alchemy.) In various early adventures, the duo travels to a town where the population is maddened by telepathy; across a starving band of unscrupulous men in midwinter; and into a town where the end of the world is prophesized to occur on the second day of their stay. Each situation presents moral conundrums and varying degrees of danger. And, while Kino packs a pistol, knives and assorted weapons, they're implemented accordingly. That is—the action elements further the pair's exploration of the human condition and a shared mysterious past. But perhaps the most telling aspect of the titular character's development comes in the form of cool detachment. Egolessly moving in and out of lives and events, Kino is afforded knowledge of a greater whole, affecting outcomes from an elevated perspective. This level of understanding may

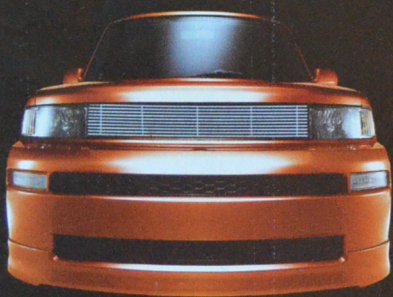
be the aspiration of many travelers (with the possible exception of the aforementioned drunken rockers), and it's certainly an aspect of what attracts the masses to stories about travel. These tales offer an experience through the manifold beauties, atrocities and ambiguities of life. *Kino's Journey* also warrants such glimpses, refracted through the unique lens of science fiction anime.

*Editor's Note: If you simply must find out more about *Kino's Journey*, check out the features in the April 2003 and June 2003 issues of *Newtype USA*.*



Newtype USA

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"I've always wanted
to make a love story."

Ryuhei Kitamura is musing on his latest film *skyhigh*—but don't think the famed director has gone soft on us. As you'd expect from the man behind *VERSUS*, Kitamura's gloriously blood-splattered tour de force, *skyhigh* won't exactly be a traditional romance. Within the prologue alone, the crime scene of a serial killing is juxtaposed with a wedding ceremony that ends with the bride's heart being forcibly removed from her body. Kitamura laughs, stating that it's the kind of romance that only he can do.

"I'm not interested in making some university or high school affair, that kind of thing. Or 'my husband's cheating on me!'—something like that." That's best left for other directors, he says, and we couldn't agree more. "I always wanted to do the *extreme* love story because people easily say, 'I love you, honey,' but it's so superficial. I wanted to ask how far could you go for love—what would you do? I'm a person who would go till the end." In the case of *skyhigh*, for detective Kouhei Kanzaki (Shosuke Tanihara), love means acting above the law to avenge your bride-to-be's sudden death. For genetics institution president Tatsuya Kudo (Takao Osawa), it's venturing into occult practices and sacrificing even the world itself, in order to revive his wife.

Higher LOVE

Maverick director Ryuhei Kitamura
aims *skyhigh* with his impressive
portfolio of works

text by AMOS WONG

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"Maybe I was against the typical Japanese personality. If I say, 'I want to be a film director!' people say, 'No, you can't; it's a dream.' In the beginning it was that simple. People told me that I couldn't do it, so I said, 'All right, I'll show you!'"

The theatrical release of *skyhigh* was spawned from the TV drama based on Tsutomu Takahashi's manga. Takahashi's earlier work *ALIVE* was also adapted into a movie by Kitamura, and the pair have since become good friends. "He's like my brother," the director says fondly. Familiar with the *skyhigh* manga, Kitamura pitched the TV series to producer Shinya Kawai about a year and a half ago. "There are eight episodes in the comic, and normally TV dramas are also eight to ten episodes, so I thought it would be perfect."

Once given the green light for the TV series, Kitamura balked at the producer's suggestion of casting Yumiko Shaku as Izuko, the guardian of the Gate of Malice, who imparts choices for the souls of murder victims: to go to heaven and possible reincarnation; to wander the earth for eternity as a spirit; or to curse your lover—but be damned to hell. "I said 'No way,' but he told me that at least you should meet her." On a day off from the filming of his feudal action extravaganza *Azumi* in Hiroshima, the director returned to Tokyo to present his smaller budgeted *Aragami* and *Jam Films* at the Tokyo International Film Festival. "That's when I met Yumiko for the first time, and I understood what the producer meant." She got the job on the spot, but Kitamura still had to complete *Azumi*. Unable to direct the entire TV series due to scheduling conflicts, he settled for helming the last two episodes.

"I knew, to be honest, that I wouldn't like the other directors' work," he remarks. "They are doing their job—and it's OK as a professional—but *skyhigh* is like my child. Tsutomu's child is my child, so I had to protect that world, but they didn't care about it that much." Creative differences aside, the series was a hit by the time Kitamura

took the director's chair, and the idea for a theatrical release came about spontaneously. Yet initially, he didn't want to be involved. "It's too easy," he explains, mentioning that many of the top ten Japanese movies of the year are based on popular TV dramas, manga and best-selling books. "The Japanese way of making movies, I think it's wrong." Animation is fine, but the live-action arena, he says, suffers from a lack of adventurous producers or talented screenwriters—hence the trend for adaptations as opposed to original projects.

"I was fed up with the easy way of making movies, but on the other hand I felt *skyhigh* was interesting because we don't have any episodes anymore. We used all the episodes from the comic in the TV drama, so if we did it, I would have to create a new story. I knew that it was going to be difficult, but I like to do things the hard way." He breaks into laughter. "I was so exhausted because I'd made four or five movies in a year and a half. I really needed a vacation, you know. I don't know why, but I said 'Yes! I'll do it!'"



↑ Kudo reveals the reason behind his nefarious plan.
↓ Kudo and his beautiful but deadly conspirator.



↑ Revenge-driven, Kanzaki is on a path straight to hell. As a spirit, Mina watches helplessly.
↓ Izuko sends visitors through the Gate of Malice to their destinies.



Higher
LOVE



A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Despite his gripes about the derivative nature of the film industry, Kitamura says *Azumi* was a manga adaptation he had little qualms about jumping into. A longtime fan of original creator Yu Koyama's work, he says his biggest influences are from the artist's manga, which includes *Orewa Chokkaku*, *Ganbare Genki* (both of which were adapted into anime) and *Sprinter*. Two and a half years prior to *VERSUS*, he heard that *Azumi* was to be assigned to a famous director; it was Kitamura's dream project, but as an unknown back then, he didn't think he'd have the opportunity to realize it.

After *VERSUS* showed at the Yubari Film Festival, however, his fate was forever altered. Following a chance meeting with producer Mata Yamamoto, who'd worked with Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas on *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (1985) and *Wind* (1992), the opportunity to helm *Azumi* presented itself. "It was such a funny night," he recalls. At a *VERSUS* party, Kitamura noticed this guy: "I didn't know him, but he was singing, speaking loudly and acting as if he was the host, so I said, 'Hey, who the hell are you?'" Business cards were exchanged—and you can guess the rest. "It's like, wow!" he laughs. "We were drinking all night. He told me: 'I love *VERSUS* and I want to work with you. You should direct a project that I'm doing right now.' So I asked, 'What is it?' and he says '*Azumi*.'"

"The comic is a masterpiece, and I knew it was impossible to make a movie out of *Azumi*," Kitamura states. "But, well, if someone else is going to mess it up, it's better that I do it!" The greatest challenge, he explains, was condensing the manga of over 30 volumes into a feature film. Furthermore,



a year and a half was spent finding someone for the lead role (played by popular starlet/singer Aya Ueto). "It was full of troubles." Kitamura recommends checking out the DVD's "making-of" documentary: "It's 80 minutes of fighting: me against Mata! It's so funny."

Nevertheless, he considers *Azumi* to be his best work to date. "Mata's been calling me and saying, 'We should do a sequel. Who else can direct it?' That's what he's whispering in my ear every day," Kitamura laughs. He's not sure he wants to do it, yet doesn't want to relinquish a sequel to another director.

Azumi has been invited to the 2004 Sundance Film Festival. "I'm very interested in the audience reaction to a *Chambara* movie. I'm sure *Azumi* will blow them away," he says.

Manga influences aside, he cites Sam Raimi as a big inspiration for becoming a director. Instead of attending school, Kitamura spent his childhood years at the cinema or reading comics and books. At the age of 16, he was shocked by *Evil Dead*. "He [Raimi] was about 23, and he was just with his friends, brought a camera into the woods...and made that masterpiece. I thought if he could do it, I can do it."

"Maybe I was against the typical Japanese personality," he muses. "If I say, 'I want to be a film director!' people say, 'No, you can't; it's a dream.' In the beginning it was that simple. People told me that I couldn't do it, so I said, 'All right, I'll show you!'"

↑ Azumi, the young and beautiful slayer of 200 warriors. According to Kitamura, *Azumi* was a 'mission impossible' project, but he pulled it off. Although the Japanese DVD has English subtitles, a US release may be tricky...



All images on this page are from *Azumi*. The DVD, from Amuse Soft, Inc., is currently out in Japan.





SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

It was important for Kitamura to retain the essence of the original work, yet he also wanted to make a movie that new viewers could enjoy without having seen the series. "Tsutomu is my best friend; I must respect and protect the world he created. So there's the Gate of Malice, Izuko the gatekeeper and the three choices the dead souls make. If I kept that, I could do whatever I wanted. That's what Tsutomu told me."

The result is a standalone work. For *skyhigh* fans, the movie provides the backstory of how bride-to-be Mina Saiki (Yumiko Shaku) became Izuko, the Gate of Malice's guardian in the TV series. While the movie ups the action quotient, *skyhigh* concentrates on the drama (unlike *VERSUS*' combat overdrive). Swordfights at the climax are more refined, executed with dramatic pauses and poses. Kitamura was upfront with his leading

lady's public perception as an action heroine following her role in *Princess Blade*. "She didn't do much action by herself in *Princess Blade*—I told her that. When you look at the DVD, you know it's all done by stuntmen. It's only in the close-ups that she's doing it. And I told her, 'I'm not going to do the same thing; you have to do all the action.' She was shocked and surprised, but she did it. She did kendo, so I knew she could do it."

As a spirit unseen by most of the living, Mina encounters the souls of her killer's previous victims, as well as the current Izuko (Eihi Shina), and discovers why she was marked for death. Other roles include Kyoko Aoyama (Naho Toda), a coroner who helps Kouhei track down his loved

one's killer, and Sayuri Toyama (Aya Okamoto), a budding journalist whose first interview is, unfortunately, with Kudo. Of the characters, Kitamura empathizes with the antagonist the most. "Kudo—he's myself. I told Takao Osawa that he may seem like the bad guy, but he's not." After all, his actions are driven by love. "It's easy to say that he's bad, but if you aren't on his side, you don't know."



"I was fed up with the easy way of making movies, but on the other hand I felt *skyhigh* was interesting because we don't have any episodes anymore... I knew that it was going to be difficult, but I like to do things the hard way."

↓ The final battle: Kudo confronts Izuko at the Gate of Malice.



↑ ↓ An insane, gun-laden, kung fu and kitana-fueled gore fest. *VERSUS* is available in the US on DVD via Media Blasters' line of Asian cinema, Tokyopost. For more information, go to www.medialblasters.com.



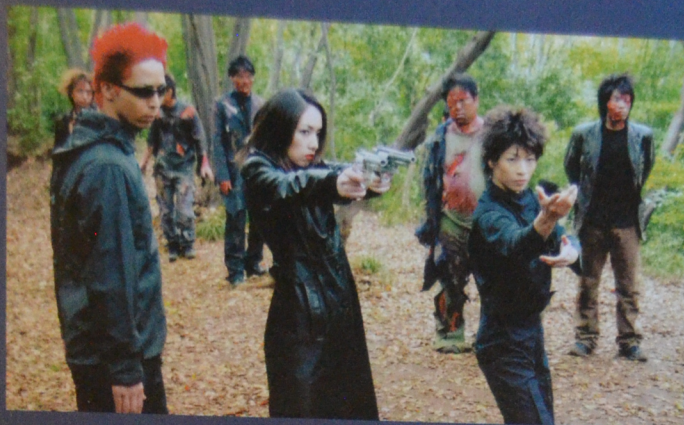


Welcome to ZOMBIE WORLD

recruited as an undead
by director Ryuhei
Kitamura, NTUSA's crack
reporter Amos Wong
goes on location at the
VERSUS shoot.

"We're calling it the **VERSUS** carnival," Kitamura laughs, summing up the last three days of shooting in a forest, 40 minutes from Shinjuku. Initially, the cult classic was planned for a re-release on DVD sporting a new 6.1 channel sound mix and music. "It's too boring to only do that," he says. Thus, the alternate version ("this is not a director's cut," he points out) will feature an extra ten minutes of new action scenes.

"Nobody has done it before—they'll re-edit, but they won't re-shoot," he



says about his extra efforts. "We just thought it might be fun to shoot some more crazy action and zombies." He's not concerned with continuity quirks over the intervening four years. "The actors' faces have changed, but I don't care. **VERSUS** is a crazy movie!"

A fake head is stomped on, exploding with blood. Tak Sakaguchi and his stunt double improvise a scene where the dark hero runs past a crawling zombie, then as an afterthought comes back with a midair somersault and elbows it in the face. The director and crew crack up with laughter. Undergoing more makeup as the day progresses, I'm told that the chunky gore on me is made of yogurt, pudding, coloring and mushroom bits. "Sounds pretty healthy...it might even be good for the skin," I joke.

"Well...it's already a few days old," the makeup staff replies.

In another scene, Sakaguchi's stunt double flips high in the air, effortlessly



↑ The director at work



↑ Sakaguchi prepares to deliver a spinning uppercut.



"I'm told that the chunky gore on me is made of yogurt, pudding, coloring and mushroom bits."

↓ "These boots are made for walkin'."



segues into a spin on his knees upon landing and shoots at a formation of us surrounding him at close range. I go into spasm and spew blood (it's sweet and syrupy). We drop to the ground simultaneously after a few beats. In the afternoon, I switch gears and become a katana-wielding feudal zombie in the background of Toshiro Kamiaka's samurai combat sequences.

After the shooting wraps, Kitamura asks about my zombie experience. "I had a great time. It was fun!" I reply.

He laughs. "Only for a day."

↓ There's never too much blood: a touch-up between takes.



Higher LOVE

HOLLYWOOD BECKONS

Kitamura left for Sydney in 1986 when he was 17 to study filmmaking and returned to Japan in 1989. He remarks that there aren't many opportunities in the local industry for budding filmmakers unless you're making art house films focusing on personal subject matters. "I concentrate on making movies for entertainment." Japanese producers, he believes, are only interested in low risk and low return. Promotion is another problem. "I want a big success. We can't make big hits because we don't put money into advertising. Because we don't get lots of money, the industry is shrinking so there's less opportunities to get in."

"When I was making *VERSUS*, all the producers said, 'This is an anime script. You can't do it for real. Even if you do, it's going to cost millions of

dollars.' Nobody gave me money, but I didn't give up." He ended up self-financing the modestly budgeted project, which attracted international attention and landed him a deal at Miramax in Hollywood. "It's easy to complain about the Japanese film industry, but it doesn't get you anywhere. You have to find your own way."

The film has opened opportunities in other media. Kitamura is directing the polygon demo sequences of *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes*, the *Metal Gear Solid* remake on GameCube. He was introduced to MGS creator Hideo Kojima by its package designer at Konami, who raved about *VERSUS* after its Tokyo International Fantastic Film Festival debut. Kojima sprung the offer after a few casual meetings. "Kojima-san asked me, and I can't refuse that," Kitamura says,



↑ Kitamura and company scrutinize a take on video playback.

despite being busy at that time with *Azumi*. He was surprised and grateful for the trust and freedom he was granted on the project; when asking Kojima (who was always on-site) whether something was too much, the response was always to do as he pleased and to take things even further. "I'm not sure if I could act like that if someone else was going to remake *VERSUS*," he admits. "There's a trailer

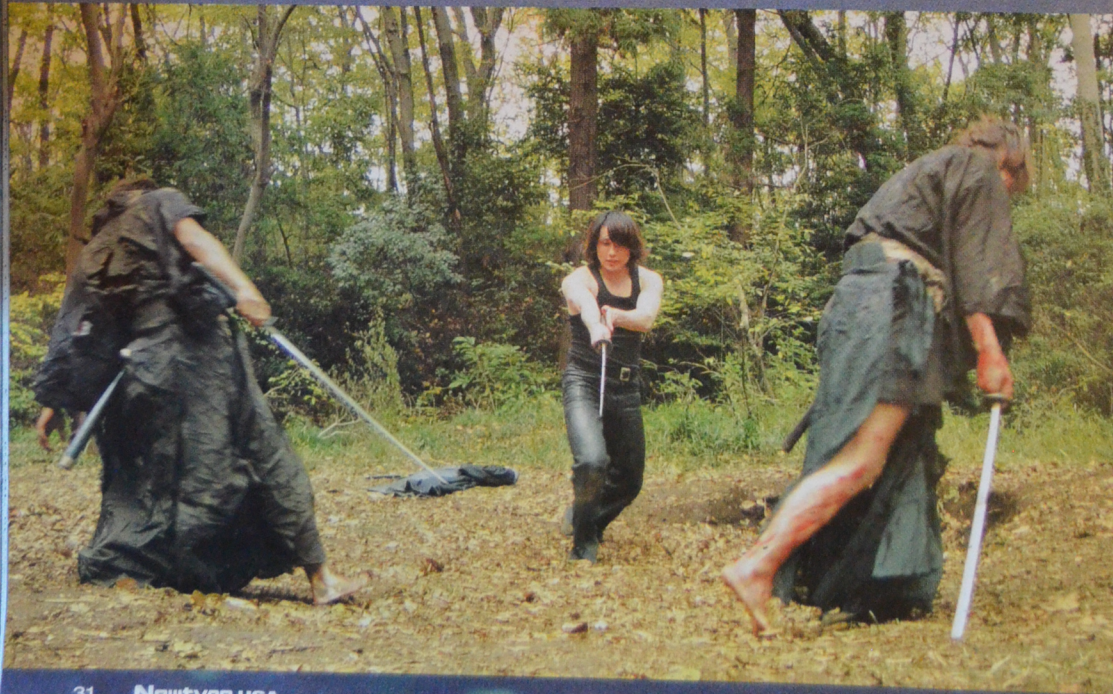
"It's easy to complain about the Japanese film industry, but it doesn't get you anywhere."



↓ The *VERSUS* carnival: "Every day has been fun." Kitamura and lead actor Tak Sakaguchi share some jokes between takes.



↓ During the lunch break, Sakaguchi brings out the katana for some swordplay.



on the website, but that's the tip of the iceberg. It's more full-throttle."

He hints at two more Japanese projects—still strictly hush, hush...but he promises we'll be surprised—and discusses shooting extra footage for a new edition of *VERSUS*. On his forthcoming Hollywood debut, Kitamura says the project will be decided within a month or two, and shooting will commence near the end of 2004. "I don't feel like rushing. Because I know if I mess up my first film in Hollywood, I don't have a future there. There are lots and lots of traps around, so I have to be very careful, but I have a good agent and representatives."

"It's going to be action," Kitamura says of the project, "because that's what they want me to do. They liked *VERSUS* and offered me a job, so obviously they want me to do 'nonstop crazy action.' Well, that's what I'm going to give them for sure."



GONZO's evolution will yield miracles

The group of creators at GONZO never stops innovating. In their string of OVAs, they exhibited cutting-edge technological skills while reaching for a full-scale blend of 2-D and 3-D animation. People thought that was only possible in OVAs, but then GONZO used the technique in a weekly TV anime, thereby raising the level of CG in TV animation. With *SPIRIT*, GONZO has decided to try moviemaking for the first time. They seek total overall quality in their work, and as a result, they're on the verge of creating something truly fantastic!

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Agito

This naive and impulsive young man awakens Tuula from centuries of sleep, and ends up drawn into battles because of her.

Tuula

A young woman who has slept for hundreds of years inside a machine. Disconcerted by the radical changes in the world, she nevertheless slowly responds to Agito's kindness.

BUSHILORD

● ANIME AND GAME BOTH CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN. SERIAL NOVEL TO START IN THE MARCH 2004 ISSUE OF COMPTON IN JAPAN

▶ www.broccoli.co.jp/bushilord/

illustrated by NAO GOTO
text by HIDEKAZU KOTO

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Sin Kazusa

The oldest son of the Kazusa family, Sin is the shogun of the Principality of Tonra, located in present-day Japan. His government aspires to bring divine order to the tumultuous world. He's based on the shogun Nobunaga Oda, who unified Japan in the 16th century.

Kagato Maeda

Kagato has been Sin's close friend since they were little. He's a lionhearted young man who's unmatched with a spear. His outgoing nature has earned him a lot of friends. He's based on Toshiie Maeda, a famous warrior who served both Nobunaga Oda and Hideyoshi Toyotomi.

AN EPIC TALE OF WARRING STATES

Elaborate planning supports this grand tale of global war modeled after the Warring States period

Broccoli, Takara, GAINAX and Nitroplus have teamed up to produce **BUSHILORD**. Until now, all anyone knew about the show was that it's an incredible sci-fi epic that uses the Warring States period as a motif, but new information has come to light.

The story is set 600 years in the future, after fragments of the asteroid Verne rained down upon Earth, destroying civilization. The resulting ice age was accompanied by drought and the lowering of the sea levels. After the water receded from the continental shelves, the resulting land became known as **KAIRIKU** (Ocean Continent). There, a collection of independent states both large and small battle for control of the land. The warriors fight in powered suits known as **SHELLS**.

You might wonder why mecha exist if civilization has been destroyed, but there's actually a solid story behind this. We can't explain it all here, but you'll be surprised at how much detail is behind the various factors that make up the world of **BUSHILORD**.

The rising stars of anime production have come together to create **BUSHILORD**. Mr. Kidani, president of Broccoli, reveals how highly the team is regarded. "Once Sunao Yoshida was signed on as director and Nao Goto as character designer, and then Nitroplus agreed to work on mechanical designs, an extraordinary lineup [of creators] was formed."

With eye-catching mecha and a well-thought-out story by today's best creators, **BUSHILORD** will likely be added to the list of modern masterpieces.

Yuzuha Takahata

Another member of the Guard-RED. This restrained young girl doesn't like fighting, but she entered the army in order to be near her fiancé Kagato. She's modeled after a well-known historical figure, Toshiie Maeda's wife O-matsu.

Mikoto Ikeda

A master of the sword and member of the Guard-RED, Mikoto enjoys the arts of war. Her shyness makes her rather unexpressive, but she has unseen depths within her. She's based on the famous commander Tsuneki Ikeda, who served the shogun Nobunaga Oda.



Hikage

Hikage is the reason this story begins. Shrouded in mystery, she appears to be a key character. She isn't based on a historical figure.

Itsuki Kazusa

Beautiful and kind to her subordinates, Sin's younger sister is very popular with the boys. She's a skilled warrior who helps her brother as leader of the Guard-RED. She's based on Nobunaga Oda's sister O-ichi.

Nene Svarovsky

Nene is a member of Sin's Guard-RED. Her family has long been vassal soldiers of the Kazusa family. She's a brave warrior, but her clumsiness sometimes causes problems. Her character is based on Hideyoshi Toyotomi's wife Nene.

Hinata Hashiba

A young boy from a lonely village on the outskirts of the kingdom. Abandoned as a child, he was taken in by foster parents. Later, he grows up on the battlefield. He is based on the shogun Hideyoshi Toyotomi, who succeeded Nobunaga Oda.

Leading Information

GAINAX is in charge of visuals!

GAINAX, a company that continuously finds fresh new ways to express itself through animation, is handling the visuals for *BUSHILORD*. The combination of GAINAX and humanoid battle mecha brings to mind *Evangelion*, and we're sure that the visuals in *BUSHILORD* will be every bit as stunning. We're also looking forward to the results of GAINAX's collaboration with Nitroplus.

A serial novel starts this March in Japan!

The *BUSHILORD* story will be told through a wide variety of media, including animation, games and novels. First out is the serial novel, slated to start in the March issue of the monthly magazine *Comptiq* (published by Kadokawa Shoten). The author, Sunao Yoshida, is also directing the project and is responsible for creating the structure of the *BUSHILORD* world. Nao Goto is in charge of character design and illustration for the novel. Having both men involved in the novelization shows the dedication of the *BUSHILORD* creators.

The band P-K-O has been hired on as voice actors

Sin, Hinata and Kagato will be voiced by the three members of the band P-K-O, who also worked on *Di Gi Charat*. Sin will be voiced by Kousuke Toriumi, Hinata by Tomo Saeki, and Kagato by Chiharu Suzuki.

quest for strength

Sword
of
Pride

PART 2 OF 4

特報

News
Flash!

If you want to make a samurai movie that's different from anything that came before it, you need distinctive and original action. Mugen's unique style of swordfighting—which seems more like breakdancing than swordplay—was based on that idea. Jin, on the other hand, uses a more orthodox sword technique. Even little Fuu gets in on the action with a few swordfighting scenes of her own. The standard samurai movie elements and historical references are kept to an absolute minimum, but you will be blown away by the action sequences and the bold and original direction. The film's director, Shinichiro Watanabe, cut the storyboards for the film's trailer, and the original art for the trailer was done by chief animation director Kazuo Nakazawa. The trailer was shown with *The Matrix Revolutions* in Japan, and it can also be viewed on the official website.



SAMURAI CHAMPLOO

● CURRENTLY IN PRODUCTION IN JAPAN

► www.samuraichamploo.com/
www.manglobe.net/

illustrated by KAZUTO NAKAZAWA
 text by KOU FURUKAWA

©manglobe/下井草チャンプルーズ

STAFF director: SHINICHIRO WATANABE; character designer & chief animation director: KAZUTO NAKAZAWA; script: SHINJI OBARA, DAI SATO & others; emono design: MAEDA MAHIRO; music: TSUTCHIE, FAT JON, NUJABES & FORCE OF NATURE; planning & production: MANGLOBE

CAST Undecided

STORY When Mugen pops into a teahouse in Yokohama, Fuu (a girl who works there) hires him as her bodyguard. Jin soon comes over, and the fighting begins!

Young talent breaking the Bushido mold

The wild young man, the surly long-haired guy, the young girl with the ear-to-ear grin—all of these kooks are about as far from “samurai” as you can get. But *Samurai Champloo* producer Shinichiro Kobayashi insists, “It’s a samurai drama...of sorts.” This show has been touted as a new kind of samurai drama, but this seems way too modern for samurai, doesn’t it?

“It’s true they don’t look much like your average samurai,” admits Kobayashi. “And it does seem that all they do is wander aimlessly from place to place. Still, Jin has some sort of samurai code within him. But Mugen has stalled out; he’s basically immune to any kind of samurai-related discipline or tradition.”

What he means by “samurai-related discipline and tradition” is the selfless devotion of body and soul to the protection of your lord—the conviction to carry out your duty no matter what, even if it means sacrificing your life. That code of behavior, known as Bushido, is the kind of lifestyle samurai are supposed to live.

“The time period we’re talking about here isn’t all that far off from the present,” explains Kobayashi. “All that samurai stuff was starting to show its age by the time [of the Edo period]. There were lots of samurai of the day who were like, ‘What? Doing my duty means I gotta cut my belly open?’ You know, the, ‘Yeah, sure I’m a samurai’ type of samurai. But Jin understands the good ol’ samurai values of yesteryear...whether he accepts them or not. Mugen on the other hand is freer and doesn’t fight according to any predefined rules. That’s because all Mugen really cares about is being strong. That’s all he’s after.”

The reckless and young always break the mold that’s been set over generations. It’s their place to overturn what came before. Perhaps it’s better to call *Samurai Champloo* an old-fashioned drama that still makes sense today.

← Jin

Mugen picks a fight with this young but exceedingly cool and calculating samurai the second they meet at the teahouse, but Jin gives just as good as he gets in the slashfest. After that, they agree to a temporary truce.

→ Mugen

This 19-year-old samurai makes good use of his own unique brand of *champloo* (“mixed up”) swordfighting. He was wandering around when he got hungry and popped into a local teahouse, where he met Jin and Fuu.

→ Fuu

This happy-go-lucky girl who works at a teahouse ends up dragging Mugen and Jin, young samurai she met at her workplace, on a journey to look for “a samurai who smells like sunflowers.”

My Favorite Samurai

Planning producer Shinichiro Kobayashi

I’ve always loved samurai films, and I’ve seen pretty much every samurai show for TV from the ’70s and ’80s, but my absolute favorite samurai is Itto Ogami from *Kozure Ōkami* (1973). The “dark road to hell” he travels along passes straight through the road of Bushido. He lives like a true samurai, and his ultimate “Suiryū” sword techniques are an integrated fighting system based on real combat methods, similar to Jin’s in this story. Director Watanabe seems to like Kazuo Mori’s *Zatoichi* series the best.

Sword & Pride

PART 3 OF 4

← Sesshomaru

The arrogant Sesshomaru is sure that only he deserves to wield his father's sword. He'll never leave it in the hands of a half-demon like Inu Yashō!

↖ Sounga

The Sounga was sheathed and sealed away 700 years ago. Its bonds recently weakened, and it came to life once more. Who will be able to control this sinister sword?

My Favorite

Samurai

Director

Toshiya Shinohara

Director Shinohara's favorite samurai is Kyuzō (played by Miyaguchi Seiji), from Akira Kurosawa's 1954 film *Shichinin no Samurai* ("Seven Samurai"). "He is the most proficient [of all of them], but he hardly ever speaks, and holds true to his own sense of aesthetics. That's what I like about him. Visually he's a bit rugged, but his blade work and sense of aesthetics are very similar to Sesshomaru's, I think." Sesshomaru's fans should check this film out!

INU YASHA SWORDS OF AN HONORABLE RULER



● NOW PLAYING IN THEATERS IN JAPAN

▶ www.inuyasha-movie.com/
illustrated by MIKA TORIGATA
finished by STUDIO CATS
text by HIDEKAZU KATO

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日本テレビ・東宝・読売テレビエンタープライズ

STAFF creator: RUMIKO TAKAHASHI; director: TOSHIYA SHINOHARA; script: KATSUYUKI SUMISAWA; sequence directors: SUSUMU NISHIZAWA, HIROFUMI OGURA & TOSHINORI NARITA; character design: HIDEYUKI MOTOHASHI & YOSHIHITO HISHINUMA; music: KAORU WADA; animation production: SUNRISE

CAST Inu Yasha: KAPPEI YAMAGUCHI; Kagome Higurashi: SATSUKI YUKINO; Sesshomaru: KEN NARITA

STORY The great sword Sounga has the power to summon the dead. It can resurrect a hundred men with a single swing, but it has been sealed away for 700 years. Now the seal has been broken, and its powers are running wild. Inu Yasha obtains the Sounga in order to bring it under control, but when Sesshomaru wants it for his own, a fierce struggle ensues.

← Inu Yasha

Inu Yasha manages to get his hands on the Sounga, but it looks like he's falling under its sway. He won't let the sword get the better of him, though. If nothing else, he doesn't want Sesshomaru to be able to say, "I told you so."

Fang of the

His great father is reflected in the sword that controls heaven, hell and earth

Most men see their fathers in two distinct ways: highly respected figure and greatest rival. Sesshomaru's father was a demon powerful enough to rule over Saigoku (modern Kansai), so it's natural for Sesshomaru to feel the urge to defeat his father and take his place as the highest of demons. However, since his father gave his life to protect Inu Yasha's mother Izayoi, Sesshomaru can never compete with him. His father also left the powerful sword Tetsusaiga to Inu Yasha, while Sesshomaru inherited the useless (at least in Sesshomaru's eyes) sword Tenseiga. Why?

Director Toshiya Shinohara says, "In a

way, [Sesshomaru] feels betrayed by his father. He wonders why his father did that, and can't let it go. It's also led to him having a complex toward Inu Yasha."

Inu Yasha doesn't know anything about his father except what he's heard. Even so, his admiration for him may be even stronger than Sesshomaru's.

"Inu Yasha isn't honest [about his feelings], so he talks about his father in negative terms, but his father is always in the back of his mind. He thinks he surpassed his father when he managed to destroy [the great demon] Ryukotsusei. But he has a complex toward Sesshomaru because Sesshomaru knew their father."

In this movie, Sesshomaru and Inu Yasha fight over the Sounga, a third sword left behind by their father. The Sounga is a double-edged sword believed to have the power to open the world of the dead, but it will control the spirit of anyone who uses it, unless they are one of the great demons. Their father was able to successfully use the sword without falling under its sway. Therefore, for Sesshomaru to surpass his father, he must conquer the Sounga.

This movie pivots around an eternal theme—the desire of a child to surpass his father. Which brother will succeed?

TV PEACE MAKER KUROGANE

● CURRENTLY AIRING ON TV IN JAPAN
 ▶ www.pm-kurogane.com/main.html

illustrated by HIROAKI KARASU
 color by YUMI UCHIBAYASHI &
 AIKO MATSUYAMA(AIC)
 finished by TOMOHIRO HIRATA
 text by HIROMI SETO

©2003 龍乃森々糖・MAGガーデン/新編劇電所

STAFF creator: NANAÉ KURONO (manga published by mag GARDEN); director: TOMOHIRO HIRATA; animation character design: AKEMI HAYASHI; organization & script: NAOKO HASEGAWA; script: HIROSHI YAMAGUCHI; planning & animation production: GONZO DIGIMATION

CAST Tetsunosuke Ichimura: YUMIKO KOBAYASHI; Souji Okita: MITSUKI SAIGA; Suzu Kitamura: YUKA IMAI; Toshizo Hijikata: GEORGE NAKATA; Tetsunosuke Ichimura: YUJI UEDA; Susumu Yamazaki: TAKAHIRO SAKURAI; Arumu Yamazaki: YUKO NAGASHIMA

STORY At the end of the Edo period (circa 1860s), just before the rise of the Tokugawa shogunate, Tetsunosuke Ichimura's parents were killed, so he wants to join the Shinsengumi in order to get revenge. But his first confrontation is winning a swordfight against master swordsmen Okita.

Tetsunosuke Ichimura

He joins the Shinsengumi in order to take out the men who killed his parents, but at the moment he's just a lowly page for Toshizo Hijikata. He's a reckless boy who knows no fear, and is bothered by the fact that people tend to see him as younger than his age.

Sword & Pride

PART 4 OF 4

ords

Director

Tomohiro Hirata

"I don't think of this show as the usual kind of Shinsengumi piece," says show director Tomohiro Hirata. "While the main character is a real historical figure, he's a nameless nobody. And on top of that, he's a lowly page—not the kind of person who gets a lot of attention. I think you can feel the freshness and delicacy of this viewpoint in the realistic portrayal of this boy's character. We show more than just the cool parts. It makes me realize that you have to tackle some things head-on, without glossing over the outrageousness."

Toshizo Hijikata

While he ranks as vice-commander of the Shinsengumi, he's actually the leader of the group. He holds the team together with a severity that borders on ruthlessness. He's feared as a "leader from hell" but is deeply respected by the other members of the group.

Souji Okita

Captain of the first division of the Shinsengumi and the best swordsman in the group. He's normally a happy-go-lucky guy, but the second he takes his sword in hand he becomes a different person, aggressive even to a fault.

crossing
SW

What is love for people who turn themselves into monsters in the name of justice?

PEACE MAKER Kurogane is a new samurai anime series from GONZO, the same team that is bringing us a remake of Akira Kurosawa's legendary *Shichinin no Samurai* ("Seven Samurai") this year. The setting for this show is the tumultuous, blood-soaked end of the Edo period, just before the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate. One of the most symbolic groups of the times was the Shinsengumi, often reviled as a "gang of mankillers."

The main character Tetsunosuke has just joined the Shinsengumi in order

to exact revenge on the man who killed his parents, and to that end he harbors an unflinching resolve to become a monster who kills without hesitation. Other warriors in the Shinsengumi like Hijikata and Okita are also more than willing to spill blood in the name of a cause, and face battle with hardened hearts. Love seems very far removed from the blood-curdling world in which these characters live.

"But that's exactly why they're looking for love," explains director Tomohiro

Hirata. But, he goes on to say, the love they seek isn't the kind of love we think of from a modern perspective. "Those were bloody times they lived in, and it was hard to know what was right and what was wrong. 'Love' for men like that—who were just trying to make it through alive—meant something very different from a simple-minded love for women or games of friendship. I think it was a kind of salvation they were after, and they risked their lives to find it."

It's the beautiful yet terrifying interaction between people, like the crossing of finely sharpened blades. But according to Hirata, this "love" will not be shown directly. Instead, he wants the audience to follow the development of each character closely and try to gather a sense of the love. And once we as viewers have given ourselves over to Hirata's idea, perhaps we too will be able to recognize the love sought by these characters.

Ayumu Kasuga

Everyone calls her "Osaka" because she transferred from there. She's hardly ever called by her real name. The city of Osaka is well-known for its Abbott & Costello-type comedy duo, and true to form, "Osaka" plays the Abbott (female) role perfectly!

Sakaki

She gives off the impression of being quiet and aloof, but her outstanding athletic abilities and impeccable style make her very popular with the other girls. Despite her image as a loner, she's a dreamer with a genuine love of all things cute.

This anime breathes life into its characters

There are basically two ways to tell a story in anime. One is to move the characters toward the resolution of a story, while the other is to let the characters move on their own and have the story emerge from that. Director Hiroshi Nishikiori is a known master of the latter method, but which one does he choose for this project?

"The characters in *Azumanga* do all the talking and moving around, so my job should be just following along after them. Instead of me adding a line or a scene, it's more like just trying to let the characters go where they will."

The characters in the manga have their own unique sense of timing, which is one of the big appeals of the *Azumanga* world. However, capturing that timing in the very different medium of anime is no easy task. We asked Nishikiori how he worked his way out of that quandary, and he came back with an elegant solution.

"We don't try to take the [timing] methods of the *Azumanga* [manga] and transplant them wholesale into the anime version. It was more like choosing a form for the show that would be considered interesting as an anime, and then following the most natural portrayal of the characters [in that format]. Again, it's not like taking an existing story and re-creating it; it's more like bringing out the living presence of the characters and letting people feel it for themselves. That's what I wanted to do."

Did the director succeed in using anime to bring out the characters even more strongly than in the original manga? You be the judge!

Slice of Life

Koyomi Mizuhara

She's known Tokyo for a long time, so the job of calling Tomo on the wild and crazy antics falls to Koyomi. She's by far the most normal compared to the other loons in this pack, but mind you, that's only by comparison!



AZUMANGA DAIOH

● ORIGINALLY AIRED ON TV IN JAPAN.
VOLUME 1 AVAILABLE APRIL 2004 IN THE US FROM ADV FILMS

► www.advfims.com/titles/azumanga

illustrated by HIDEKI TACHIBANA
finished by J.C.STAFF
background by STUDIO KANON
text by HIDEYUKI KATO

©あずまきよこ・メディアワークス/あずまんが大王製作委員会

STAFF creator: KIYOHICO AZUMA; director: HIROSHI NISHIKIORI; character design: YASUHISA KATO; art production director: TAKASHI WADA; animation production: GENCO / J.C.STAFF

CAST Chiyo Mihama: TOMOKO KANEDA; Sakaki: YUU ASAKAWA; Ayumu Kasuga: YUKI MATSUOKA; Koyomi Mizuhara: RIE TANAKA; Tomo Takino: CHIEKO HIGUCHI; Kagura: HOUKO KUWASHIMA; Kaorin: SAKURA NOGAWA; Yukari Tanizaki: AKIKO HIRAMATSU; Minamo Kurosawa: AYA HISAKAWA; Mr. Kimura: KOUJI ISHII

STORY Chiyo-chan is a ten year old high school student! Her classmates are unique characters one and all, from the wild and crazy Tomo to the aloof dreamer Sakaki. What new craziness is in store for them?

Tomo Takino

A self-professed wild-and-crazy high school girl with more spunk and energy than anybody else. In her hands, even the smallest event becomes a major ruckus. Well, she's the one causing the ruckus, but...

Kagura

An athlete on par with Sakaki, she sees Sakaki as her rival. Because of her conviction that Sakaki is a serious person, she winds up unintentionally pulling her away from the cute things she loves.

COMMENT FROM Kiyohiko Azuma

How does creator Kiyohiko Azuma feel about his manga being made into an anime? He says, "The anime [version] is the director's baby, so I don't think it would be appropriate for [me] the creator to go shooting my mouth off, but as the foremost expert on *Azumanga* I would like to say something. Following the end of the run of the [manga] series, I'll be recharging my batteries for a while, so I hope the anime [version] will be just the sustenance I need to keep me going during my recharging period." Does that mean his next project will somehow be determined by the success of the anime series?

PROFILE

Kiyohiko Azuma's parodies of Pioneer LDC titles like *Tenchi Muyo!* earned him a considerable cult following, but the *Azumanga Daioh* manga series was his break into the big time.

Chiyo Mihama

A genius child prodigy who entered high school at the age of ten. Her family's incredibly rich, but she still insists on earning her own spending money. Chiyo-chan looks like she has everything, but she's no good at sports, and stories about people getting hurt send her into cold tremors.

ANTICIPATION^{XI}



MARCH 2004



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TAKERU MEETS AN INCREDIBLE GIRL...FROM OUTER SPACE?!

KONO MINIKUKU MO UTSUKUSHII SEKAI

Work on GAINAX and Shaft's new sci-fi anime *Kono Minikuku mo Utsukushii Sekai* is moving forward. The series premise reveals things from outer space that aren't living organisms by earthly definition. These "beings" take the shape of humans and encounter people on Earth, helping them experience everyday feelings and moments of joy or surprise. This original series is sexier, funnier and even more action-packed than GAINAX and Shaft's earlier work *Mahoromatic*.

High school student Takeru Takemoto is tired of normalcy. One day, while working as a motorcycle courier, he encounters something glowing with a brilliant light. This thing soon transforms into a female form and falls from the sky. As if that's not enough, a huge monster appears before his startled eyes!

Hikari and Akari, two girls who appear in front of Takeru, seem to be from outer space. Takeru, his best friend Ryo Ninomiya and his cousin and childhood friend Mari Nishino spend some wonderful days on Earth. But something mysterious and dark looms over them...

Other characters that show up include Ryo's unflappable younger sister Kimi Ninomiya and Takeru's aunt and uncle Sumie and Iccho Nishino. There's also a mysterious woman named Jennifer Portman. Shinichi Asakura and Daijiro Matsumura are Takeru's wild and crazy friends. Amika Kurebayashi is one of his classmates, and Sakurako Urushima is another motorcycle courier.

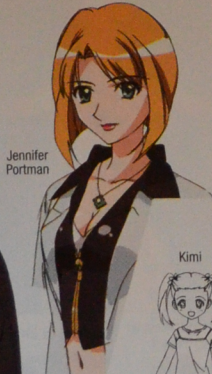
These strange things from outer space have slipped into the utter banality of everyday life and are opening our eyes to new worlds.



Hikari



Sakurako Urushima



Jennifer Portman



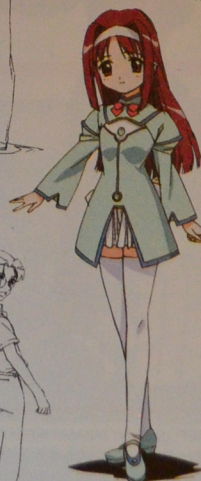
Kimi



Takeru Takemoto



Daijiro Matsumura



Akari



Iccho Nishino



Shinichi Asakura



Sumie Nishino



Mari Nishino



Ryo Ninomiya

STAFF original concept & story organization: HIROYUKI YAMAGA & SHOJI SAEKI; director: SHOJI SAEKI; character design & general art production director: KAZUHIRO TAKAMURA; script: TOMOYASU OKUBO, SUMIO UETAKE, SHIN ITAGAKI & SHOJI SAEKI

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THE WORLD'S BEST NEGOTIATOR MAKES HIS APPEARANCE ON TV IN JAPAN!

YUGO—NEGOTIATOR

Yugo—Negotiator, a 13-episode anime series, is based on the popular comic by Shinji Makari and Shu Akana and is scheduled to air in Japan this February. The first six episodes, collectively titled "1st NEGOTIATION," are set in Pakistan, with the remaining seven episodes, "2nd NEGOTIATION," staged in Russia. Each story boasts its own staff, offering two distinctive production styles.

A negotiation can be like a battle, using spoken words as weapons, and Yugo is the best negotiator in the world (with an impressive success rate of 97.4%). His success comes from knowing how much to trust people at critical moments. Part of his appeal is that

along with intelligence and the physical and mental strength to withstand any kind of torture, he's remarkably compassionate.

In "1st NEGOTIATION," Yugo attempts to rescue a kidnapped businessman after the previous negotiator on the case was killed by the guerilla group Dacoit. The primary suspect in the affair is a fearsome warrior named Ali.

In "2nd NEGOTIATION," a girl named Nadenka is being held captive in Russia, and her grandfather Sergeyevich asks Yugo to take her to Japan. Sergeyevich is descended from aristocracy, and the kidnapping seems to revolve around copious stores of hidden assets.



Yugo Beppu



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Laila



Ral



Mayuko Iwase



Yusuf Ali Mesa



Reiichi Kogure



Origa Elenova



Mariko



Nadenka



Lyuba

STAFF (1st NEGOTIATION) director: SEIJI KISHI; character design: TAKEHIKO MATSUMOTO; series organization: KAZUHARU SATO; art director: AYUMI MIYAKOSHI; filming director: MEGUMI SAITO; editor: TAKESHI SEYAMA; animation production: G&G DIRECTION (2nd NEGOTIATION) director: SHINYA HANA; character design: KENICHI IMAIZUMI; series organization: KENICHI KANEMAKI; art director: JIN NAGAO; filming director: MASAHIRO OKINO; editor: TAKESHI SEYAMA; animation production: ARTLAND

IT'S THE NEAR FUTURE, AND GLOBAL WARMING HAS CAUSED SEA LEVELS TO RISE!

DAPHNE IN BRILLIANT BLUE

Daphne in Brilliant Blue is an original TV anime currently airing in Japan.

Global warming has raised sea levels, submerging many continents underwater. The young girl Maia lives in an ocean city, and her goal to become an elite agent of the Oceanographic Agency is undermined despite her obvious potential, as she failed the qualification exam. At a loss for what to do, she reluctantly starts living in the Kamchatka branch office of a small service corporation called Nereis. There she performs grunt work including investigating adultery, searching for missing pets, confronting vicious criminals and even acting as a decoy hostage. While she diligently studies for the next exam, her thoughts often turn to her late grandfather whose last cryptic utterance was the word Daphne.

Because Nereis is the name of a sea nymph, we might see our heroines diving into the dangerous depths in their "uniforms" (swimsuits)!



Maia Mizuki

After transformation



Illustrations are from the concept art

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STAFF director: TAKASHI Ikehata; series organization: SEISHI MINAKAMI; planning assistance: FUMIHIKO TAKAYAMA; character conception: SATOSHI SHIKI (working on manga version); character design: KAZUNORI IWAKURA; design works: SHINGO TAKEBA; animation production: J.C.STAFF; production: TOSHIBA ENTERTAINMENT / HAPPINET PICTURES / J.C.STAFF / GENCO and others



Gloria



Rena Honjo



Shizuka Hayama



Yu Park



BEAUTIFUL YOUNG ANGELS FIGHT TO PROTECT MANKIND TENBATSU ANGEL RABBIE☆

The PC game *Angel Rabbie* (from the "Angelic" series) has been made into an OVA titled *Tenbatsu Angel Rabbie*☆, and the DVD is now available in Japan from Toshiba Entertainment.

In a distant future, magic and science have been combined, yielding many great accomplishments. The magical city of Sorceriam exists on the moon; it uses the most advanced mystical technology. However, a war for control of the city breaks out, employing powerful magic on opposing sides and destroying human civilization on Earth. A few thousand years later, mankind slowly builds a new civilization, but the scars from the Great Magical War run deep, as strange giant beasts and monsters continue to menace Earth.

During this time, Sorceriam was completely cut off from Earth, allowing life on the lunar surface to flourish. Queen Mikhol and the Seven Sisters now rule over the people of the moon, and in an attempt to lead humanity down the right path, they dispatch agents known as Angels down to Earth. The Angels fight to protect humanity from the strange creatures, while bits of silliness help create a comical sci-fi fantasy.

The angels are the elite, chosen from a group of lower-ranked angels known as the Surrogater. The heroine is a new Surrogater named Lasty Farson (voiced by Mayumi Iizuka). She usually takes the form of a 12 year

old girl because her powers have been sealed away, but when her powers are freed she turns into Angel Rabbie and returns to her normal 16 year old self. Each Angel has a special type of magic (a "Mode"), but Lasty's powers are still unknown.

What will happen to Lasty and her alter-ego Angel Rabbie when they're sent to Earth?



STAFF director: SHINJI ISHIIHARA; episode director: FUMIHIRO UENO; character conception: CHISATO NARUSE; character design: NORITAKA SUZUKI; animation production: AIC

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AN EMOTIONAL DRAMA ABOUT YOUNG MAIDS!

MOEKAN

The love adventure game *Moekan* (PC version by Kero Q; PS2 and Dreamcast versions by Princess Soft) is now an OVA, and Volume 1 is available in Japan from KSS! A total of three volumes will be released.

The isolated Moekko Island is owned by Moekko Company, an anarchic capitalist nation with the largest capital reserves and military power in the world. Escort maids are the company's "merchandise," and training sessions for them are being conducted on the island.

The main female character Rinia (voiced by Mia Naruse) is the oldest type of android, and is very clumsy. She was found just as she was about to be disposed of. The main male character is Takahiro Kanzaki (Tomoyuki

Morikawa), the head of the escort maid training facility. Once an influential member of some organization, he has since been relegated to the island.

Other characters make appearances as well, including a special kind of android named Kazusa Asagiri (Kaori Fujisaki) who was sent to the island from company headquarters to monitor Takahiro. Fuyuha Jissouji (Dynamite★Ami) is a librarian maid. The mysterious maid Suzuki (Emiya Nagase) wanders around the grounds late at night looking for something. Kaori Kirishima (Kanari Kanzaki) is Takahiro's brilliant secretary.

STAFF director: KAZUHISA OONO; script: MAYORI SEKISHIMA & MASASHI KUBOTA; animation production: AXIS

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Rinia



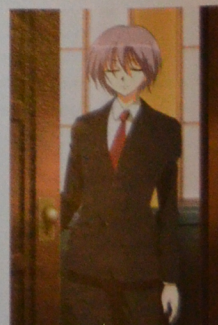
Fuyuha Jissouji



Suzuki



Rinia and Takahiro



Takahiro Kanzaki

A SERIAL ATTACKER FROM A STORY NO ONE BELIEVES MOSO DAIRININ

Moso Dairinin, a psychological thriller series from Satoshi Kon, has a very unique opening you won't want to miss. It's set to begin airing this February in Japan!

Tsukiko Sagi, designer of the popular character Maromi, was assaulted in the streets of Musashino, Tokyo. According to her statement, the criminal was a young kid wearing rollerblades and holding a baseball bat. But Tsukiko's statement was too vague to be taken seriously, and those around her wondered if she made up the whole thing.

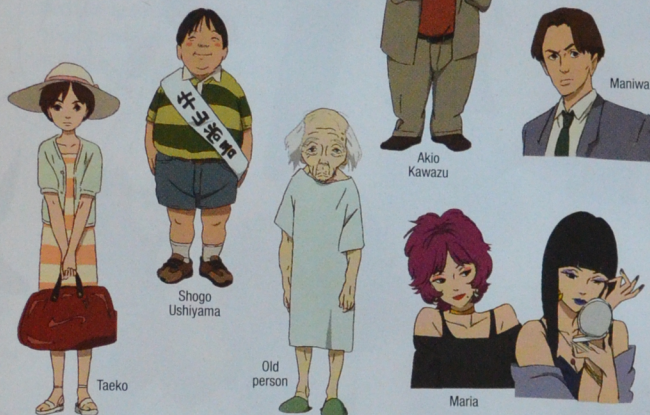
But the street slasher (aka "the batboy") has attacked another victim in the same manner. If Tsukiko's statement was false, then what about this rash of attacks?

Satoshi Kon, known for such films as *Sennen Joyu* ("Millennium Actress") and *Tokyo Godfathers*, is the creator and director of the show. Character designer Masashi Ando is famous for *Mononoke Hime* ("Princess Mononoke") and *Sen to Chihiro no Kamakushi* ("Spirited Away"). The

script was done by Seishi Minakami of *Boogiepop wa Warawanai* ("Boogiepop Phantom") fame.

Animation production is by MADHOUSE.

The main character in each episode is a different victim, and the story develops around them. This doesn't mean the episodes aren't connected. In fact, the entire series hinges on the connections between Tsukiko, the detectives and the victims. Who in the world is this batboy?



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Maromi



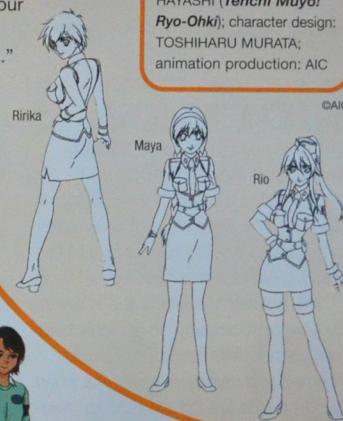
Yuichi Taira

BEAUTIFUL
POLICEWOMEN
IN ACTION!

BURN-UP SCRAMBLE

The OVA series *BURN-UP* has been completely redone as the new TV series *BURN-UP SCRAMBLE*, which began airing in Japan this January with an all-new cast and story. In the show, the three policewomen Rio, Maya and Ririka deal with enemies the regular police can't handle. The police action series follows these beautiful girls as their unconventional behavior changes our notion of "warriors."

STAFF director: HIROKI HAYASHI (*Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki*); character design: TOSHIHARU MURATA; animation production: AIC



©AIC

A TALE OF MANHOOD! AREA 88

Kaoru Shintani's hit manga *Area 88*, published over 20 years ago, has recently been made into an anime that's now airing in Japan. Taking place in the Middle East in the early '80s, the plot follows Makoto Shinjo, a war photographer with the goal of capturing the true essence of humanity. After several experiences on the battlefield, he comes to Area 88 and

meets a group of seasoned fighter pilots preparing for the worst—among them, the series protagonist Shin Kazama. Realistic in its depiction of human drama, fighter planes and reflections of the world at the time, this story of manhood has begun.



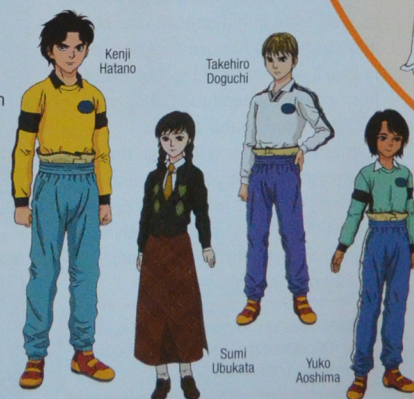
Shin Kazama

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HIS DREAM IS TO BE THE BEST BOAT RACER IN JAPAN MONKEY TURN

Monkey Turn, Katsutoshi Kawai's popular manga that's currently running serially in *Shukan Shonen Sunday*, has been animated and is currently airing in Japan. Kenji Hatano, the main character, is fascinated by the "monkey turn," a high-speed turn on the surface of the water, and has decided to become a professional boat racer. Other characters appear, such as his rival Takehiro Doguchi, his childhood friend and almost-girlfriend Sumi Ubukata, the female racer Yuko Aoshima and Kanichi Koike, the extremely stern and

rigid man who coaches him. Kenji learns a lot as they encourage him and stimulate his sense of rivalry in his quest to become the best boat racer in Japan.



Kenji Hatano

Takehiro Doguchi

Sumi Ubukata

Yuko Aoshima

STAFF director: KATSUHIRO AKIYAMA; character design: JUN OKUDA; series organization: ATSUHIRO TOMIOKA; animation production: OLM

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WETA SCOOP!

LIVE-ACTION EVA UPDATE

The new year started off with a bang for *Evangelion* fans thanks to the January release of *Resurrection*, the first volume of the Directors' Cut of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Not only does the disc contain footage never seen before outside of Japan, but it also includes a 25-minute interview with Richard Taylor, co-founder of the Academy Award-winning Weta Workshop (*The Lord of the Rings* trilogy), which is currently toiling away on the live-action *Evangelion* feature film.

Wait a sec...say what? More info on the *Eva* flick?! Hot damn!

While we swore we wouldn't reveal all the juicy tidbits in the interview, we do have this snazzy piece of concept art to tide you over. If that's got your knickers in a twist, be sure to check the DVD from ADV Films.



Angel 2 illustration by Greg Broadmore, Weta Workshop. ©2004 A.D. Vision, Inc. Original concepts © GAINAX. All Rights Reserved.

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The new year started off with a bang for *Evangelion* fans thanks to the January release of *Resurrection*, the first volume of the Directors' Cut of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Not only does the disc contain footage never seen before outside of Japan, but it also includes a 25-minute interview with Richard Taylor, co-founder of the Academy Award-winning Weta Workshop (*The Lord of the Rings* trilogy), which is currently toiling away on the live-action *Evangelion* feature film.

Wait a sec...say what? More info on the *Eva* flick?! Hot damn!

While we swore we wouldn't reveal all the juicy tidbits in the interview, we do have this snazzy piece of concept art to tide you over. If that's got your knickers in a twist, be sure to check the DVD from ADV Films.



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THIS MONTH IN ANIME HISTORY

FEBRUARY 1984 - PIONEERING JAPANESE FIRMS TEST THE US MARKET

Anime and its fandom in America went unnoticed by the public until the 1990s. Even the sci-fi and comics fandom from which it arose considered it a tiny, freaky subgroup for almost that long. But the Japanese animation industry, which was aware of US fandom almost from the start, tried to figure out how best to work with it.

Toei Animation, Tokyo Movie Shinsha and Tatsunoko Pro all asked American fans to help them test-market anime in America between 1978 and 1980. Toei provided anime posters, toys and similar items from its current TV hits (*Space Pirate Captain Harlock* for boys and *Candy Candy* for girls) for the first anime dealer's table at the 1978 San Diego Comic-Con. This was less for actual sales than to watch the American fan reaction to merchandise from TV cartoons that Toei knew were unknown in America. TMS provided a subtitled 35 mm print of *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* for a screening at the 1980 World Science Fiction Convention in Boston, where the audience was given participation forms asking if they would pay to see a movie like this in the theaters. The response showed fan enthusiasm, but not at a level that would convince any major American theatrical, TV or toy licensors to attempt to market anime throughout America.

Early anime fans got most of their manga and anime books, magazines, records and similar imports from Japan through Books Nippan in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo district. Books Nippan was the US retail outlet of Japan's Nippon Shuppan Hanbai book and gift shop chain. Its Los Angeles store was the head office of a couple of other shops in large American cities. By 1981, Books Nippan was getting enough unsolicited mail orders that the store's energetic young manager, Yuji Hiramatsu, decided to actively build up the anime market throughout America. He also realized that for every fan devoted enough to buy an anime book or magazine just for the pictures, there were potentially ten more—or a hundred more—who would buy them in English instead of Japanese.

Books Nippan's first English-language publication was a beautiful, glossy 88-page manga magazine titled simply *Manga*. The test issue, dated Spring 1982, debuted at Books Nippan's first dealer's table at the July 1982 San Diego Comic-Con. Unfortunately, it was a commercial disaster although almost everyone praised its art and story quality. It had an \$8.00 cover price at a time when the most expensive American comic-art magazines like *Heavy Metal* cost only \$2.00, and the average American costumed-hero fan

was not yet familiar with Japanese manga or the manga art styles. There was never a second issue of *Manga*.

Books Nippan's second project was more carefully thought-out, and was produced as a co-venture with Yoshinobu Nishizaki, the producer of the *Uchu Senkan Yamato* anime series. Nishizaki was an aggressive promoter of *Yamato*, which had already been sold in the US where it was renamed *Star Blazers*. One of the most popular *Yamato* merchandising items in Japan was the animation manga book—the "comic book" version of the first 26-episode TV series using full-color frame reproductions from the animated film. This was also a hot import with the American fans. Books Nippan and Nishizaki agreed to publish an English-language edition, changing the names to match the *Star Blazers* version. The books would be produced and printed in Japan under the name of West Cape Co., Ltd. (nishi = west; zaki = cape) for sale in America exclusively by Books Nippan.

Books Nippan advertised (and took pre-orders for) the *Star Blazers* animation comics for so long that fans began to question whether they would actually be published, but then Volume 1 appeared in February 1984. That eased the worries, and the fans were satisfied to wait for the release of the next four volumes the following year. This American edition was considerably different in format from the Japanese edition; it was a high-quality, large trade-paperback format, 162 pages for \$11.25 per volume. This was expensive when the graphic novel format was still experimental in America. But they were "real books," in full color, and fans considered them worth the price.

Come to think of it, no public financial statement was ever issued, so it is just an assumption that the *Star Blazers* animation comics were successful. But all five volumes were published, and Japanese businessmen are commercially-minded enough that the series would have disappeared before completion if they had not sold well. Books Nippan's next project in 1986, an English-language edition of Takao Saito's *Golgo 13* manga series (over 100 volumes in Japan), sold so poorly that it was cancelled after four volumes. It would be another year until Eclipse Comics, Viz Comics and First Comics would begin the slow buildup of American editions of manga through the regular American comic book distribution system—and over ten more years until "American manga" became eagerly sought by the American public.

—FRED PATTEN

GASTRONOMIC GLADIATORS AND FOUR-MINUTE WONDERS

In the television black hole that is the non-ratings zone down under (roughly December to February), with its repackaged reruns and second rung overseas series, there are few programs to brighten the evenings of diehard TV addicts.

One that's been building a loyal following over the past few months is the irrepressible **Iron Chef**.

Screening on SBS-TV, Australia's home for adult anime and cult fare, the hit Japanese-US show has been cooking up a minor storm on the charts (especially in the highly coveted 26 - 36 year old female demographic), prompting SBS to consider buying another 26 episodes to bring us up to date.

Those whose tastes run to big screen action entertainment should keep their eyes peeled to www.easterneye.com.au/ to find out where to catch the likes of **The Princess Blade**, **Volcano High**, **Blood**, **Avalon** and other theatrical releases Melburnians have been enjoying for the last few months. The wider rollout of these Eastern Eye primers to theaters around Australia should commence in February.

Over in Adelaide, a longer season of films is on offer at the Mercury Cinema. A collaboration between the Media Resource Centre and Flinders University, **CineAsia 2004** is organized by Adele Hahn and Dr. Mike Walsh, who curated the highly popular Heroic Cinema screenings at the Mercury. Its program reads like a Madman/Eastern Eye catalog, including **The Grudge**, **Musa**, **Dark Water** and **End of Evangelion**, alongside arthouse faves like **Springtime in a Small Town** and **Battle Royale**. Screenings begin in January and run every Wednesday evening for 20 weeks. For more information, visit www.mrc.org.au/mercury/screen.htm.

Downsizing to a smaller screen, animation and music fans (preferably with broadband connections) should zero in on **Four-Minute Wonders**, a competition set up by Film Victoria, Triple J and ABC's new media unit to harness local talent in the production of online music videos (www.abc.net.au/4minutewonders).

Melbourne studio Squarei, of **Robot Republic** fame, won two slots on the bill, scheduled to air in March. A highlight will be their take on the song "Seven" by Bidstone Moss featuring demonically cute J-pop characters. Squarei's work can also be seen on another classy ABC initiative, **Winged Sandals**, animating Greek mythology for beginners (www.wingedsandals.com). The standout tale is a mesmerizing modern riff on **Orpheus and the Underworld**, which animates the

gorgeous graphics of Nathan Jurevicius (**Scary Girl**), whose toys, prints and sculptures you can still see on display in **Girls and other Scary Things** at Melbourne's Outré Gallery until early February (www.outregallery.com).

Not to be kept out of the non-ratings picture, Madman's February goodies include some big titles like **Witch Hunter Robin**, **Final Fantasy: Unlimited**, **Revolutionary Girl Utena: The Movie** and the not-to-be-missed DVD of Isao Takahata's devastating **Grave of the Fireflies**. Or you could take on the **Battle Royale** DVD Collector's Edition and **Bruce Lee: The Immortal Dragon** documentary from Kaleidoscope, also out in February.

—CEFN RIDOUT



Rock and Roll and cute collide in Squarei's music video, "Seven."

Images courtesy of Squarei

ICHI...TASTY...

The New Year began with a real surprise in UK anime, with the sudden and unexpected availability of **Ichii the Killer: The Anime** from an outside contender. Premier Asia, the distributor that previously released the live-action incarnation of Takashi Miike's controversial manga-based S&M shoot-out, unleashed the **Ichii** anime on the UK with such speed that it even seemed to pre-empt the Japanese release. So for anyone wanting **Ichii**, you'll need to buy the UK Region 2 DVD. Presumably in the wake of **Kill Bill** and **The Animatrix**, Premier Asia's sister company Made in Hong Kong also clambered aboard the bandwagon with the release of a live-action boxed-set titled **Manga in Motion**. The set repackages the company's excellent DVDs of the Jackie Chan **City Hunter** movie, the Nam Nai Choi remake of **Story of Ricky** and the Clarence Ford **Dragon from Russia**, which everybody now admits is a remake of **Crying Freeman**.

Made in Hong Kong isn't the only company hoping to ride the mainstream wave. ADV Films is putting a large amount of its marketing into a successful launch of **Final Fantasy: Unlimited**, expecting substantial crossover between the worlds of anime, computer gaming and the movies. **FF:U** shares ADV's March slate with the first volume of the fairytale-influenced **Pretear**, alongside **Slayers Return** and later episodes of **King of Bandit Jing**, **Excel Saga** and **Noir**. The company has unveiled a tentative date for the first volume of the long-awaited **Evangelion**:

Director's Cut—watch for it in the UK this May. ADV Films also unveiled one of its new directions at the Sci Fi London Film Festival, which saw the UK premiere of the anime label's new live-action acquisition—the alternate history live-action movie **2009: Lost Memories**, set in a world where Japan entered WWII on the side of the Allies. The festival also included UK showings of **Invasion: Anime** and Artsmagic's latest Miike movie **Full Metal Yakuza**.

Other releases for next month include three continuing volumes from MVM—**serial experiments lain**, **Fruits Basket** and Volume Nine of **Sailor Moon**. Not to be outdone, Manga Entertainment is releasing **New Dominion Tank Police** and **Orguss 02**. Manga Entertainment's related company (sister, cousin, third-uncle...it's difficult to remember) Island Records has just signed Japanese pop idol Hikaru Utada, so perhaps we can also expect a little more J-pop in the UK sometime soon.

And finally, it is sad to note the closure of one of the UK's most superb resources for manga and Japanese books. The Asahiya Shoten store in Colindale's Oriental Shopping Plaza has finally shut down after a decade in business. Often touted as the "biggest Japanese bookstore in Europe," Asahiya was presumably defeated by the onslaught of Internet ordering. Originally designed solely to serve the Japanese ex-pat community, Asahiya's staff eventually overcame much of their surly shyness when confronted by armies of manga fans hoping to cruise the extensive comics shelves. Asahiya started shrink-wrapping the books to prevent browsers, a move which coincided roughly with the opening of Amazon Japan—two unrelated events which may have signalled the beginning of the end.

—JONATHAN CLEMENTS

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CLAMP artist Satsuki Igarashi's Chipmunk Cheeks

My Favorites of All the Books I've Read

I feel like I'm ALWAYS writing stuff like this, but a year passes so quickly. Time goes by so fast it's scary. Why does it have to pass so fast? Maybe I shouldn't be counting the days by the deadlines I have to meet. (At the moment, we at CLAMP have two serial manga running in two different weekly magazines, so every week we have two deadlines. That means once we get through eight deadlines, the month is almost over.)

Last month I took the liberty of talking about "autumn reading" and wasn't able to get to my originally planned topic of books I like, so I want to talk about books this month, too. In preparation for this column, I spent some time thinking about what kinds of books I've read in my lifetime. Two in particular came to mind: *Chocolate Senso* [by Makoto Oishi, 1979] and *Dare mo Shiranai Chiisana Kuni* [by Satoru Sato, 1988]. Both are children's books. I read *Chocolate Senso* first—it got me hooked on reading. Before that one came along, I hated to read individual words, much less whole books (and for the same reason, I hated Japanese class in school). I'd gotten the book from one of my relatives and left it sitting there for God knows how long. I can't remember why I eventually decided to pick it up, but once I started, I couldn't put it down! I just had to read it all the way through

illustrated by CLAMP



to the end. (Now that I think of it, I can sort of remember the basic story, but I wonder why it was titled *Chocolate Senso*. I mean, the impetus for the story was supposed to have something to do with éclairs and cream puffs. I don't remember chocolate being important at all...) Anyway, that was the book that taught me how fun reading is. The other one—*Dare mo Shiranai Chiisana Kuni*—was the first book I ever pestered my parents for the sequel to. It seems this series is in paperback now, but at the time all I could find were the hardcover editions, which were way beyond what I could afford with my grade schooler's allowance. But I really wanted to read the rest of the series, so I got my parents to buy the sequel. Both books are probably long gone from my parents' house by now, but I still remember them as ones I really enjoyed.

It'd be a shame to waste the opportunity to ask the other members of CLAMP about their favorite books of all time. Nanase-chan likes the works of Seishi Yokomizo. I don't think I would've read anything like that in grade school, but in fact, Nanase tells me she even wrote him a fan letter! Neko-pon likes the *Captain Future* series [by Edmond Hamilton, 1967]. She says her older brother got her hooked on them, and she likes them so much that she's still searching for volumes she doesn't have. Mokona likes *Born Free* [by Joy Adamson, 1960]. She says the book really brings back memories...we can only wonder what memories those might be!

In case you're wondering, I haven't read any of those. Of course I've seen some of Seishi Yokomizo's works that have been made into films, and I've seen *Captain Future* (the anime version they did on TV in Japan—I wouldn't mind seeing it again) and *Born Free*, so I do know the stories somewhat. Here's a place where our differences in taste really show through. I have thought of reading some of those books, but as of yet I've made no moves to do so. The reason is, books I want to read even more keep popping up. I would like to read the others sometime, but who knows when that will be. I guess we'll just leave it at "sometime" [laughs]!

You know, I think I've done it again. I seem to have ended up writing about something other than what I initially set out to write. I guess I'll leave off talking about my favorite recent books until some other time. This month's topic ended up being more like "Some Books You Never Forget."

Fred Patten's Anime Archive

Last December, news broke that the new *Tetsujin 28 gou* ("Gigantor") anime would be hitting the airwaves in 2004. It was also announced that a live-action feature film of the same title would make its Japanese debut in theaters in 2004.

Tetsujin 28 gou is the latest in a laundry list of anime properties making the move to live-action, including *Cutey Honey*, *Initial D*, *Evangelion*, *Akira*, *Lupin III* and *Sailor Moon* (TV series), to name just a few.

Seeking details, I went to the top American source for news about *Gigantor*. Fred Ladd, who produced both the 1965-1966 and the 1980-1981 US TV versions, wasn't encouraging. "The live-action movie has actually been said to be in production in Tokyo for years," he told me. Apparently, a producer began to work on the project, but he then ran out of money. He recently re-started, and is now shooting in a Tokyo building. "But the *Astro Boy* live movie, first publicized as 'Coming From Sony Christmas, 2000' ...now is being planned for release 2007! And who can say the same fate doesn't await the *Gigantor* movie? I've seen nothing on this project so far but puff. Presumably the film is to be completed about a year from now. We'll see."

Oh, yeah...the *Astro Boy* live-action theatrical feature, full of snazzy CG effects. I wrote some very enthusiastic anime columns about it when Sony's "coming Christmas 2000" press releases first appeared in the Hollywood movie-industry newspapers in March 1999. Then it was postponed to Christmas 2001, then to sometime in 2004—and now it's 2007?! I'm still looking forward to seeing it (Sony ImageWorks did a great job with its CG FX in the 2002 *Spider-Man* movie), but excuse me if I stop holding my breath.

Unfortunately, such disappointments are common. There was even more publicity from Warner Bros. during the 1990s for its "coming soon" live-action *Speed Racer* feature, to star Johnny Depp as Speed. Although I haven't heard that this movie has been officially cancelled, I also haven't heard anything about it in the last three or four years. Or, who remembers how anime fans' jaws dropped when Disney announced in 1997 that it was about to begin preproduction on a live-action *Star Blazers* theatrical feature for a 1999 or 2000 release? Slightly more believable was news between 1997 and 1999 that Disney was investigating acquiring the rights to produce a *Sailor Moon* live-action feature. At least it was later announced that the project had fallen through (reportedly, Disney and *Sailor Moon's* Japanese publisher, Kodansha, couldn't come to an agreement). Talk of a Disney *Star Blazers* movie, however, just disappeared as though the original press release never existed.

Of course, live-action movies of anime hits have been made, although the ones available in America have usually been low-budget productions by small independent studios or Hong Kong studios, and have been easier to find on video or DVD than in theaters. *The Guyver* was made

into two live-action features: *The Guyver* in 1991 (somewhat notorious for implying Mark Hamill was the star when he has only a supporting role), and a sequel, *The Guyver: Dark Hero*, in 1994 (without Hamill, but preferred by fans as a more serious adaptation). *Fist of the North Star* was a 1995 production with Gary Daniels and Malcolm McDowell, viewed by fans as not bad considering budget limitations. A 1992 Hong Kong production of *City Hunter*, with Jackie Chan as Ryo, is humorously action-packed. Another 1992 Hong Kong production of *Wicked City* is a solid enough sci-fi/horror action film. But a 1992 Taiwan/Thailand production of *Dragon Ball* (US DVD title: *Dragon Ball: The Magic Begins*) is universally reviled for a slew of reasons: bad acting, bad cinematography, bad FX and bad dubbing—not to mention being very unfaithful to the *DB* manga and anime.

The Rose of Versailles (aka *Lady Oscar*) is probably the most tantalizing live-action movie version of a manga/anime hit not available in America. This shoujo classic, set amidst the splendor of the court of Louis XVI just before the 1789 French Revolution, was a big-budget Japanese-financed production filmed in 1978 on location at the Palace of Versailles, helmed by noted French director Jacques Demy and starring a beautifully costumed European cast. Strangely, although the movie was filmed entirely in English, it hasn't been released in America but has hit the shelves in Japan, France, Italy and Germany (with appropriate subtitles, naturally).

I haven't included the many Japanese live-action movies of manga and anime hits that haven't reached America. Two higher-profile titles are the 1974 live-action *Lupin III* movie and the 1999 live-action *GTO* movie. So if production on a live-action Japanese movie of *Gigantor* has actually begun, it may well get finished—and considering the popularity of *Gigantor* in America, it may well be released here. Let's hope so.

And let's hope that the growing popularity of anime in America means that some of the publicized big-budget American productions of live-action anime movies will be finished. Warner Bros.' *Speed Racer*? Sony's *Astro Boy*? Warner Bros.' *Akira*, which was announced as the next project by *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* director Stephen Norrington and screenwriter James Robinson? 20th Century Fox's *Dragon Ball Z*, directed by Roland Emmerich, with special effects by Industrial Light & Magic? Let's hope, let's hope, let's hope...

Ask Fred Patten why he fell in love with anime, and he's quick to pinpoint the reason: "It's all Tezuka's fault! His manga turned me into a manga junkie in 1970, and then I discovered giant robot anime in 1976." Patten became an anime pioneer when he helped start a local anime club in 1977. Soon after, he began writing articles about anime and manga for fanzines and magazines—and before he knew it, he was being hailed as "America's oldest living anime fan." Sheesh!



Jonathan Clements' Living Manga

Dead Like Me

Murder victims have one last chance before they leave the world behind. If someone dies under suspicious circumstances, they end up at the Gate of Malice, a portal guarded by the mysterious Izuko (Yumiko Shaku). A pretty woman in a kimono made of rags, Izuko will give them one last choice. They can accept their fate and journey into the afterlife and reincarnation. They can reject their fate and walk the Earth for eternity as a ghost. Or, they can destroy their hopes of reincarnation but gain the chance to seek revenge on those who wronged them.

Such is the premise of *Sky High*, a former *Young Jump* manga by Tsutomu Takahashi that gained a new lease on life in Japan after the American success of *Six Feet Under*. Takahashi's story was swiftly optioned and put into production as a ten-part late-night series on TV Asahi in 2003, featuring numerous cult directors from the film world, including Ryuhei Kitamura (*VERSUS*) and Shun Takahara (*Consent*). Each corpse of the week arrives at the Gate of Malice and is presented with the spooky choice—their decisions allowing each episode to veer in a number of different directions. In the first, a pregnant murder victim relives her early life with her husband, turning the episode into an office romance with a twist the audience already expected. The second begins with the battered corpse of a girl being dumped in the trunk of a car, and threatens to become a police procedural, with the added twist of a victim who can stand on the sidelines and comment. However, once the flashbacks begin, it becomes a tragicomic tale of a bad girl's last days, like Ai Iijima's *Platonic Sex*, but without the happy ending.

It's not the first Japanese TV show of its kind—three similar concepts were broadcast in 1999. Its predecessors include *Heaven Cannot Wait*, in which a man is assigned good deeds by his guardian angel to keep the Grim Reaper at bay; *Heaven's Kiss*, in which a dead girl must convince her rock-star lover to get back on stage; and *I'll Be Back*, in which a man is forced to relive the late 1990s over and over again until he gets his life just right. But what singles out *Sky High* is the glorious nastiness of its premise. Where Hirokazu Koreeda's acclaimed movie *After Life* assembled dead people and asked them to focus on their happiest moment among the living, *Sky High* takes a very negative stance. All of Izuko's charges have met with sticky ends in the land of the living, and many relish the chance to grab revenge before they enter the land of the dead. There is

plenty of scope for differing attitudes toward death—some victims simply refuse to believe that they are ghosts, while others relish the opportunity.

The disparate stories are united by recurring characters, including the rag-and-bone man who scours the streets of Tokyo for the flotsam of the modern world, and also serves as an inadvertent bus service for the spirits. Similarly thrown on the scrapheap of society, the ghosts are able to catch a ride on the back of his truck. His child assistant occasionally sees them, but who's going to believe a kid?

Sky High returned in 2003 as a movie with a spin on Tarantino's *Kill Bill*—a very different tale of a bride who's left for dead but returns to exact revenge. Right now *Sky High* shares the airwaves with *Salaryman Kintaro*, *Fire Boys* and *Aim for the Ace*—all similarly based on manga, and all proof that the idea of "living manga" won't find itself standing before the Gate of Malice any time soon.

Jonathan Clements has translated over 70 anime and manga, including *Ironfist Chinmi*, *Street Fighter II* and *Slow Step*. He has also been a voice actor, dubbing director, and scriptwriter, most recently on audio dramas for *Judge Dredd*, *Strontium Dog* and *Doctor Who*. He is the co-author of the *Anime Encyclopedia* and the *Dorama Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese TV Drama Since 1953*.



O'kinasai. ("Please go.") Izuko (Yumiko Shaku), fate dealer of murder victims at the Gate of Malice.

© 2003 skyhigh film project

Gilles Poitras' Below the Surface

When does Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* take place?

Miyazaki himself has been intentionally vague about exactly when the movie occurs. However, in the book *Princess Mononoke: The Art and Making of Japan's Most Popular Film of All Time*, the US edition of *The Art of Princess Mononoke*, he simply says the story is set in the Muromachi era (1392-1573). This places the story within a sizeable window of almost 200 years. However, through certain pieces of evidence from the film we can considerably narrow down some likely dates. Of course, some of these clues may seem anachronistic and thus misleading. For argument's sake, it's interesting to place these cultural and historical items into a time reference. Follow along as we look at each item separately in the order they appear in *Mononoke*. We'll then combine the evidence to see what can be deduced.

THE WEAKENING OF THE SHOGUN REFERENCE:

During the meeting in the village, one of the elders mentions that the Shogun's power is weakening. In light of Miyazaki's statement, this comment could only refer to the Muromachi Shogunate and could have two possible meanings. The first is that the government of the Ashikaga shoguns was weaker than the government of the earlier Kamakura Shogunate, and the second option is that the power of the Ashikagas is declining. This would place the story toward the end of the Muromachi era.

BANNERS:

There is a particular style of banner seen in *Princess Mononoke* called a *nobori*. This type of banner is attached to a pole with loops along the top and one side; the pole consists of a long vertical piece and a shorter piece extending from one side of the top of the longer pole, the shape resembling the number 7. These are seen when Asano's men attack the town in their attempt to capture the iron-works. Hatakeyama Masanaga developed the distinctive design of this banner in 1456, so the story could not have taken place before that date.

HISO:

The first firearms we see are the *hiso* (fire lances) carried by the guards who are protecting the supplies being brought in by oxen. *Hiso* are weapons of Chinese origin that were only occasionally used in Japan. A *hiso* is basically a small cannon mounted on a pole with a spike at the other end; the spike was pushed into the ground before firing. They not only fired projectiles but also functioned as a primitive flame-thrower; both uses are seen in the attack on the caravan by the wolves. Their first recorded use in Japan is during the Onin Wars (1467-1477).

MATCHLOCKS:

Shipwrecked Portuguese introduced the matchlock to Japan in 1543. However, as we don't see the samurai using them, there is always a slight possibility that Lady Aboshi got the technology independently before that date so they don't provide much of a clue. Or the events could simply be taking place in an isolated area as yet untouched by the technology.

THE SAMURAI ATTACKERS:

The attackers are said to have been sent by Lord Asano. The earliest Lord Asano according to my reference books would have been Nagamasa, who was born in 1546. Nagamasa was a well-known warrior and the brother-in-law of the famous general Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Given this birth date, the events would have been when he was an adult, roughly 14-16 years later at the very earliest. This fact gives us a better early date than before, a date in the 1560s. The heraldry of the banners is so varied as to be useless as evidence, apparently included in the show for decorative purposes. It is interesting that the emblems of the historical Asano are not among them.

CONCLUSION:

Given the above information, the earliest decade that the story could be set in is the 1560s, and the latest date is 1573, the last year of the Muromachi era. Not an exact date but still pretty good given the internal evidence we have available. In fact I'd say very good, as we have been able to narrow the possible date to a period of fewer than 15 years out of the almost 200 of the entire Muromachi era.

A resident of the San Francisco Bay Area, Gilles-the-Librarian decided to not read much unless the book had lots of pictures after getting his second Masters degree. Actually, he reads a lot about Japan and has written two books on anime: *The Anime Companion* and *Anime Essentials*. Currently, his free time is devoted to researching more about anime, manga and Japanese culture. He also maintains an anime related website at www.koyagi.com and watches local subtitled Japanese TV when not viewing anime.

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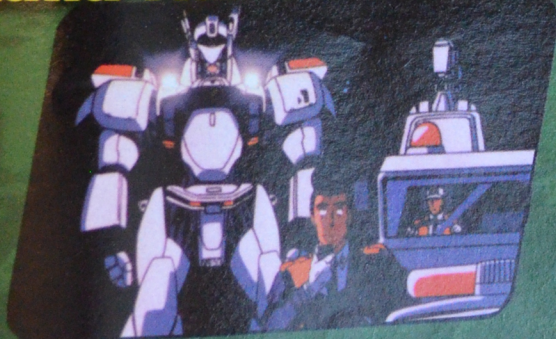
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エンジェル/ダスト

ANGEL DUST

6 Partner

七瀬 葵 AOI NANASE



Story so far

Yuina entered into a contract with the Emulate battle android Seraph. Meeting with Seraph gave Yuina the courage to change her life. However, her childhood friend Akiho has entered into a contract with Seraph's enemy, the Emulate Lucifer. Yuina has made the decision to confront Akiho face-to-face, but there has been some sort of change in Akiho and Lucifer...

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Saiyuki, the hit title inspired by the famous Chinese story *Xiyouji* ("Journey to the West"), is a tale of companionship, troubled past and civil unrest. With Volume 8 hitting the stores in February, *Newtype USA* has compiled an episode guide on the series so far to get you all caught up. Enjoy!

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VOLUME 2 OLD FRIENDS, NEW ENEMIES

Episode 6—Rancorous Exchange

While on their way to an inn, Sanzo and his companions come across a gruesome slaughter of demons marked with talismans. They learn that the scene is the work of Master Rikudo, a demon-hunting monk. When they meet Rikudo, Sanzo recognizes him as a figure from his past who has gone insane.

Episode 7—Goodnight

After the battle with Rikudo, Sanzo is unresponsive to Goku's cries. When Rikudo is unrepentant, Goku goes mad with rage, shattering his power limiter and acquiring awesome strength. Out of control, Goku severely wounds Rikudo and then turns on his own teammates, until the Merciful Goddess herself appears to offer helping hand. The next day, a weakened Sanzo departs alone to settle his score with Rikudo.

Episode 8—Constant

Out in a desert, the enemy's zombie attacks have been constant for four days straight. Meanwhile, Kougaiji

receives new orders from Lady Gyokumen Koushu. He discovers that his half-sister Lirin has disappeared and sets out to find her. In the meantime, the party, having defeated the zombies, ends up in a town where they meet an ominous fortune-teller who predicts dire fates for them all. Lirin appears when a massive crab monster arrives to kill Sanzo's group. While she slays the creature with a single punch, she challenges Sanzo's group shortly thereafter. When Kougaiji and his group arrive, a battle ensues.

Episode 9—Lethal Trap

Kougaiji is surprised to find himself swiftly losing the battle with Goku. But before their fight ends, another crab monster is summoned by the fortune-teller, Chin Yisou. This creature, which poses a serious risk to all parties, forces the two groups to form a temporary truce to destroy it.



Episode 10—Fake the Face

Back on their journey, the party encounters a village where they are mistaken for a group that helped the village 400 years ago. However, they're thrown in jail when a horribly dressed copycat party comes through to take advantage of their hospitality. When a puppeteer demon attacks, the only ones who may be able to help the village are their prisoners!



SON GOKU

The mischievous monkey archetype with a mysterious growing staff is full of spirit and energy. While playful and immature, he also displays inconceivable raw power in battle. Interestingly, in the novel that inspired *Saiyuki*, the monkey character is the only one to reach the enlightenment. How will this original plot point play out in the parody anime?



Episode 13—Crude Counterfeit

Sanzo and his party meet up with Lirin again when they stumble across a monastery occupied by just two child disciples. Goku's faith in Sanzo is broken, and he rebels when the priest refuses to trust the two children. But Goku soon finds his own trust betrayed when the seeds from

the weird tree he ate take root inside of him. With both Lirin and Goku's DNA, the tree begins to produce clones of them, posing an interesting problem for Sanzo and party.

Episode 14—Sweet Client

It's break time for the day as the party replenishes supplies in a small town.



While Hakkai and Goku shop for food, Gojyo looks for girls. Unfortunately, his fun is ruined when a small child, Meihou, starts following him around with more on her mind than getting a new playmate.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The Japanese character used to express the name of the anime, *Saiyuki*, is a play on the title of the translated name for the Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. While both terms sound quite alike and the characters look very similar on paper, the written character for the original novel reads "Diary of the Journey West" whereas the *Saiyuki* anime title translates loosely as "Diary of extreme entertainment." Accordingly *Saiyuki* hysterically parodies the characters of this historically important popular novel originally attributed to Wu Cheng'en in the 1570s. A central figure of both, Monkey, translated in Japanese as "Goku," has appeared in various forms in countless works of fiction and many anime, most recognizably in Akira Toriyama's *Dragon Ball* series.

VOLUME 1 THE JOURNEY BEGINS



Episode 1—Go to the West

Genjo Sanzo is a cynical young priest who has been entrusted with protecting the Maten Scripture. Our story begins when he is called to the Temple of the Setting Sun at Chang'an by the Sanbutsushin, Those Who Watch from the Heavens. They reveal that across Shangri-la, the brotherhood of demons and humans has been shattered, and demons have begun taking orders from a higher power.

They fear the unrest is due to an unknown force trying to resurrect Gyumaoh, the Devourer, a fearful creature sent to sleep ages ago. Sanzo's task is to find out who is behind this. However, he doesn't trust the demonic blood of the men with whom he is to travel—old friends Sha Gojyo, Cho Hakkai and his loud companion Son Goku. Regardless, the four set out together toward India.

Episode 2—First Game



Although it's only the first leg of their quest, Gojyo and Goku immediately begin bickering. When they stop at a nearby inn, they meet a shy girl named Houmei. Her friend was killed by demons, causing her to hate all demons. Even at this early juncture, the party has attracted enemy attention as a group of assassins.

Episode 3—His God, My God

Traveling through the mountains, the group settles down at Inayama Temple with monks who grant them access upon realizing Sanzo's station. While the local clergy are somewhat disillusioned by the group's cynical attitude toward life, the youngest of them, Yoh, may better understand them when the group battles a demon that threatens to kill everything at the Temple.

Episode 4—Crimson

Back on the road, Hakuryu, Hakkai's pet who can transform into a jeep, crashes into a river. Their fighting and complaining arouses laughter from a

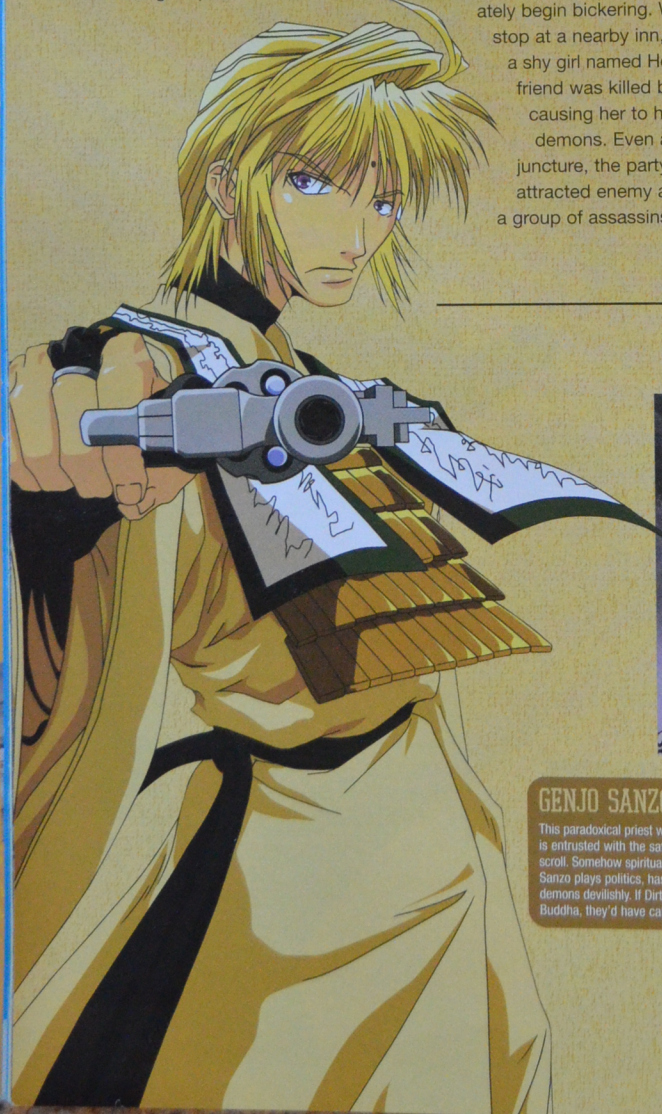


girl named Shunrei who is washing clothes at the river. She gives them dry clothes and a place to stay for the night, and they learn of her quest to find her lost love, a demon named Jien. When she ventures out alone to find him, the party jumps into action.

Episode 5—Pure Assassin



Frustrated by the party's ability to dispatch his men, Kougaigi (the rebellious demon employed by the people attempting to resurrect Gyumaoh) sends his loyal apothecary Yaone to kill them. Upon encountering them at a tavern, she is shaken by their kindness and abilities, which tests her loyalty to Kougaigi.



GENJO SANZO

This paradoxical priest with a spiritual firearm is entrusted with the safety of an ancient scroll. Somehow spiritually connected to Goku, Sanzo plays politics, has blond hair, and kills demons devilishly. If Dirty Harry walked with Buddha, they'd have called him Sanzo.

VOLUME 3 CONFRONTING THEIR DEMONS



Gojyo recovers from Sanzo's unorthodox healing method, Goku finally gets back from his foraging trip, but he's acting a little odd. They must ultimately persevere when Chin reveals himself as a ghost from Hakkai's past and attacks the party.

Episode 12—Wandering Destiny

While Hakkai wonders how the sins of his past could come back to haunt him, the battle with Chin Yisou continues. Hakkai draws the line when Chin threatens to kill Sanzo. However, he might not be able to contend with Chin's mind-control abilities.

Episode 11—Tragic Revenge

Disturbed by nightmares, Hakkai reflects on his past—one littered with blood and lost love. He and Gojyo encounter a marionette controlled by Chin Yisou, who plants a deadly mah jong piece in Gojyo's heart. While



VOLUME 5 STING OF THE SCORPION

Episode 19—Don't Go Alone

Still heading west, the party helps a family of sisters. While the rest are quite enamored with the girls, Sanzo is forced to suspect ulterior motives when a set of strange assassination attempts can't be explained otherwise.

Episode 20—Sandstorm



As the party begins to tire of traveling through the desert, they are led to a small town by a young boy. This time they are turned away by the local citi-

zenry, for fear of a desert demon that may have one of the lost scriptures of Heaven and Earth. The Sanzo group investigates and ends up trapped in the demon's underground lair.

Episode 21—Selfish



While feverish with scorpion venom, Sanzo defeats the demon in her underground castle. But they have a bigger problem—the castle is collapsing! All appears lost, when they're

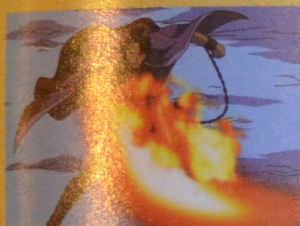
unexpectedly saved by Kougaiji, who has come looking for the scriptures as well. Their meeting, however, is not peaceful. And with Sanzo's life on the line, Goku has no choice but to again remove his power limiter.

Episode 22—Devastation

While Kougaiji and Dokugakuji are ultimately unprepared for the awesome strength of Goku's true form, it turns out that neither is Sanzo's party. In the end, Sanzo steps up to face the rampaging Goku, even while his body is being ravaged by the venom.



VOLUME 7 THE GODS OF WAR



Episode 27—Event

Driving at night, a truck filled with apparent immigrants run off the road by a bright red light in its path. Out of that light step two figures, a calm man with bound arms and another, carrying an assault rifle. And it appears they're looking for Sanzo's party! When they find them at a nearby bar, their master arrives. A dark-haired man in shackles, he identifies himself as Homura, the Prince of War. And he wants Sanzo's Maten Scripture!

Episode 28—Lonely War



After their violent encounter with Homura, the group rests up, finding themselves falling into old habits of bickering and fighting. Meanwhile, it would appear the enigmatic Homura has plans of his own, as he begins

enlisting armies of demons into service. From his newly acquired seat in the tower at the center of the demon movement, he sets his next target: Hotu Castle, Lady Koushu's fortress.

Episode 29—Unexpected Defeat



Hotu Castle is burning. As the alarms blare, it's clear that the castle security is woefully unprepared for the fearsome power of Homura and his two subordinates. As Lady Koushu prepares to leave the castle, Homura descends into its lowest levels in search of the Seiten Scripture. While doing so, he meets Kougaiji and Dokugakuji, who aren't pleased with his presence. Meanwhile, on the upper levels, his subordinates Zenon and Shien meet up with an old friend turned enemy.

Episode 30—Undertaker

Now back at the tower, Homura decides to release a powerful demon under his employ to retrieve the Maten Scripture from Sanzo. This demon, calling

himself the Undertaker, encounters Sanzo's party in a totally barren town, a utopia of his own devising. While he delights in mind games, he's not so prepared when Sanzo and company begin to play back.

CHO HAKKAI

Compassionately caring for all creatures, this demon is not necessarily what he seems. Once a human being working as a school teacher, he killed 1000 demons only to face the judgment of the gods and transformation into demonic form. His character is loosely based on the Pig from *Journey to the West*.



VOLUME 4 STORMS



Episode 15—Fated Guys

The group is reminded of their first meeting while setting up a tent to get out of a rain storm. A tale of tragedy, camaraderie and sin, it all begins when Gojyo, a demon-human crossbreed, finds Hakkai—then named Gonou—near death out in the night. While nursing him back to health, Gojyo discovers his indescribable connection to the polite man. When Genjo Sanzo arrives to capture Gonou for his crimes, Gojyo chooses to defend Gonou.



Episode 16—Be There

As the rain persists, reflection continues. While Sanzo, Goku and Gojyo look for Gonou, he wanders toward the castle of Hyakugen Maoh. When he finds himself attacked by a brother of one of the demons he's killed, he repents by attempting to take his own eye. When the party shows up, the demon attacks Gojyo, but Gonou is forced to come to his defense. After discovering Maoh's castle burnt to cinders, Gonou willingly surrenders to Sanzo to return to the

Sanbutsushin for judgment, in a past that unites the four even to this day.

Episode 17—Eden

Sanzo's party continues the trek through the seemingly endless stretches of desert toward the town of Tofugai. Along the way, they encounter a woman who pleads with them to take her to Tofugai and then collapses. However, when she later leads them there through a mist of darkness, everyone but she and Sanzo turns to stone! What's going on here?

Episode 18—Vice or Justice

Still driving through the desert, the Sanzo party meets up with Tongpu, an old friend of Hakkai. When they learn that Tongpu now works with a band of mercenary demon-hunters

dubbed Quan-Long, they decide to meet in the next town to catch up. Soon after, they discover that Quan-Long has a girl that matches the description of Yaone! The Sanzo party decides to investigate, which puts Hakkai at odds with his old friend.



VOLUME 6 DEMON RISING



SHA GOJYO

The pink-haired gambler 'ladies man,' Gojyo, fights with the Chinese kung fu weapon, the monk's spade. Which makes us wonder, what's with all the quasi-religious bad asces? Aside from the spiritual nature of *Saiyuki's* source material, in ancient China, not unlike Japan's samurai, men of the cloth were often the most skilled warriors of the day. Gojyo's weapon is lifted directly from the annals of kung fu history and the famous Shaolin Temple in China.



Episode 23—Scapegoat

Painful memories emerge when Hakkai refuses to allow a girl to be sacrificed to demons that hold her town in an iron grip. He hatches a plan that inspires an uprising of townsfolk against their demonic oppressors.

Episode 24—Mother



It's bad news for the eternally hungry Goku when the next town they arrive at is in the midst of a serious famine. While hunting for food, Gojyo meets up with a young woman, Yanming, who has a half-demon child with crimson hair and eyes like him. He feels the need to help Yanming, but the locals are prejudiced against half-breeds and want her gone. However, they're

given much more to fear when the twisted scientist Ni Jenyi's robotic bee turns Yanming into a giant bee creature.

Episode 25—Tomfool! Tomboy!

Lirin decides it's time to capture Sanzo's party on her own once and for all. But it might not be as simple as throwing boulders the size of small towns at them. So she enlists three bumbling demons to be her personal minions.

Episode 26—Calling!

Lady Koushu, annoyed with Kougaiji's failure to dispatch the Sanzo party, sends an elite armored troop of demons after them and gives Kougaiji the new task of collecting the Five Scriptures of Heaven and Earth. While Kougaiji broods over the decision, the Sanzo party encounters the Demon Armored Corps in a forest. While they are easily dispatched, their leader Rashu's spirit remains and manages to lock Sanzo and Goku away inside a massive pillar of armor.



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STORY A witch from the badlands has cast a curse upon Sophie and turned her into a 90 year old woman, so she moves into the wizard Howl's moving castle and declares herself his housekeeper. How will the wartime love that develops between these two fare in this world that mixes science with magic?

Suzuki packs the spirit of the times into the project

Hayao Miyazaki directs high-quality films, and producer Toshio Suzuki markets them into huge hits. Ever since *Majo no Takkyubin* ("Kiki's Delivery Service"), the seamless collaboration between these two has resulted in some major successes. Suzuki accurately incorporated current popular culture into his bold marketing strategy for *Majo no Takkyubin*. He hired Yumi "Yuming" Matsutoya to do the theme song, had Shigesato Itoi write the ad copy, and made very strong choices in casting voice actors. What excellent marketing techniques does he have in mind to entice fans into watching this latest film?

Twenty years of magic from Hayao Miyazaki

It's been 20 years since *Kaze no Tani no Nausicaa* ("Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind"), and with each new film, director Hayao Miyazaki has created grand depictions of different worlds and the characters who live in them. The post-apocalyptic *Nausicaa* unfolded one thousand years after the fall of a giant industrial civilization. *Mononoke Hime* ("Princess Mononoke") was set in Muromachi period (circa 14th-16th century) Japan. *Tonari no Totoro* ("My Neighbor Totoro") was set closer to home, in late 1950s Japan. But two common threads tie them all together—a depiction of the relationship between humans and nature, and a reflection of the modern world. Miyazaki films are both fantastical and realistic, and therein lies the key to understanding why his works are so appreciated.

1984



Kaze no Tani no Nausicaa
("Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind")

Intense action permeates this entire film, which Miyazaki made from his own manga. The depiction of the terrifying yet beautiful Fukai forest is particularly noteworthy. Miyazaki has said of the show's setting, that he wanted to make "something you thought was ugly that turns out to be beautiful; something you thought was beautiful that turns out to be unimportant." [Quote from COMIC Box, Fusion Product, May & June 1984]

1986



Tenku no Shiro Laputa
("Castle in the Sky")

This is a grand, sweeping adventure about boys and girls, pirates and brigands. In regards to the "treasure" in this film, Miyazaki says, "First and foremost there is such a thing as a treasure island. I don't know what kind of treasure it is, but I wanted to say that it exists. It's not the kind of treasure you can bring home and count, though. The value of this treasure isn't fiscal value." [Quote from *iichiko*, Japan Belier Art Center, 1994, Issue 33]

1988



Tonari no Totoro
("My Neighbor Totoro")

Set in Japan in the late 1950s, it tells the story of two young sisters' encounters with a forest spirit named Totoro. It was a small story without much drama, and Miyazaki himself says, "I was really skeptical about whether or not this thing could even make it as a movie." But in the end it continues to be loved by many fans and has become one of Miyazaki's most representative works. [Quote from *Tonari no Totoro Ekoteshu*, Tokuma Shoten]

1989



Majo no Takkyubin
("Kiki's Delivery Service")

This story of a girl finding her independence through being a witch was a huge hit. Miyazaki says, "This is a story about a fictional place, but the story we tell is that of girls who've come to the city and somehow managed to find work and lodging, but are now wondering what to do after that." [Quote from *Majo no Takkyubin*, Tokuma Shoten Roman Album series]

1992



Kurenai no Buta
("Porco Rosso")

This film tells the story of a middle-aged man who casts a spell upon himself and becomes a pig. High praise for this movie came from those around him, but Miyazaki himself had complex feelings about it. He says, "All along I'd been telling my staff to make [movies] for the kids, and not for themselves, but I'm ashamed to say I went ahead and made this one for me." [Quote from *Shukan Asahi*, Asahi Shinbunsha, January 5 & 12, 1996]

1997



Mononoke Hime
("Princess Mononoke")

"Ghibli was labeled as a studio that makes movies that are friendly to the environment, and that made me very uncomfortable," says Miyazaki. The savagery and power of this film seem to support the statement regarding the environment. The fact that Miyazaki rose to the challenge of producing a full-on historical drama generated quite a stir, and despite the convoluted story, the film was a big hit. [Quote from *Mononoke Hime*, Kinema Junposha]

2001



Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi
("Spirited Away")

A ten year old girl wanders into another world and has a variety of strange and wonderful encounters. Miyazaki says, "No matter what happens in the world, be glad you were born. That's the point I wanted to drive home by making this movie." This film offered a rousing message for children and outshone even *Mononoke Hime*. [Quote from *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi—Chihiro no Daiboken*, Fusion Product]

Ghibli's Latest



Miyazaki hopes you experience the festival in the theater!

Studio Ghibli clearly focuses on film quality, taking the time to do things right. The studio also pays attention to the financial aspects of their work, making sure that each film does well enough at the box office to support the making of the *next* film. "A movie is a festival," says director Hayao Miyazaki, who along with his team at Studio Ghibli, is mainly concerned with encouraging people to watch their movies in the theater. Miyazaki himself offers the example of parents who say they've watched *Tonari no Totoro* ("My Neighbor Totoro") on video with their kids dozens of times. He says he's just not happy to hear stories like that. Miyazaki explains: "I want the kids to have the experience of going to the theater with their parents and watching a movie in the dark. It's an experience that's like going to a festival. I want to believe that there's actually some meaning in having that kind of experience." [Quote from *Animage*, Tokuma Shoten, November 1998]

Miyazaki's partner and Studio Ghibli producer Toshio Suzuki looks back on what he's done up to now and comments that the period when he was a weekly magazine editor was "a time of chasing after hits," whereas the period as an anime magazine editor was "a time of deciding for ourselves what the hits would be." And now as a producer at Studio Ghibli, Suzuki adds that the present is "a time of making the hits ourselves."

This grand collaboration between Hayao Miyazaki and Toshio Suzuki certainly paid off with *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* ("Spirited Away"), their previous work, which brought more than four million people all around the world into theaters.

And now we have *Howl no Ugoku Shiro* ("Howl's Moving Castle"). The connection between the themes of love and war in the film has been revealed. But beyond that, all we have at this point is a collection of hints. Now, we can only wait for the festival to begin.

◀ This image of the castle was drawn by Miyazaki himself, and a 20-foot-tall model of it has been constructed.

INNOCENCE



• SCHEDULED FOR SPRING 2004 THEATRICAL RELEASE IN JAPAN FROM PRODUCTION I.G

©2004 士郎正宗/講談社・IG.ITNDOTD

STAFF original work: MASAMUNE SHIROW;
director & scriptwriter: MAMORU OSHII;
sequence director: TOSHIHIKO NISHIKUBO
& NAOKO KUSUMI; character design:
HIROYUKI OKURA; supervising animators:
KAZUYA KISE & TETSUYA NISHIO; music:
KENJI KAWAI; producers: MITSUHIKA
ISHIKAWA & TOSHIO SUZUKI

STORY In a world where the boundary
between human and machine has blurred,
humanity has lost its identity. A new kind of
struggle begins in the space between an arti-
ficial body and an electronic brain...



Batou's Love

All that remains of Batou's humanity is a piece of his brain. He has memories of a certain woman—she's the reason he still wishes to retain his humanity, despite being a "doll." This is the story of his love and his hunt for evil hackers with his partner Togusa.

1995



Kokaku Kidotai ("Ghost in the Shell")

On sale now in the US
from Manga Entertainment

This movie is Oshii's interpretation of the manga
by Masamune Shirow. The complex visuals and
realistic action were well-received in Japan,
and also garnered many overseas fans. The
video even topped the Billboard chart in the US!

2001



Avalon

On sale now in the US
from Buena Vista Home Video

Shot entirely in Poland, Oshii's fourth live-action
title is a complete turnaround from his previous
live-action films. The strong-minded heroine,
who seems like a live-action version of Motoko
Kusanagi, is impressive. The anime-inspired
gaming world is created using advanced digital
technologies.



Astonishing Preview Sequences

These frames appeared in the theatrical trailer. Although the trailer is a compilation of incoherent footage, and the story hasn't yet been unveiled, the visuals are stunning. It's packed with Oshii wizardry, like meticulously detailed background art, dolls and a bird-like airplane.

The representation of themes in Mamoru Oshii's films

Mamoru Oshii decided on dolls as the theme for the movie *Innocence*. Since dolls represent human bodies, Oshii was inspired to ask, "What lies behind the ill-begotten motivation to copy a human body?" [Quote from "Ningyo no Tabi," *Neppu*, Studio Ghibli] The movie's concept begins with the premise that an extremely mechanized body is almost as beautiful as a doll. The main character, who has an artificial body and an electronic brain, becomes something other than human. Oshii's unique methods of turning concepts into films can be seen in all his works.



Hans Bellmer's Dolls

Hans Bellmer (1902-1975) was a Polish doll sculptor who designed the doll shown here. Although it's hard to tell from the photo, the parts of this doll are connected by spherical joints. When Oshii saw photos more than 30 years ago, he was impressed with the artistry of Bellmer's dolls. During a recent research trip overseas, he had a chance to see them in person. While on the trip, he developed the basic structure for this movie—the enemy as “a man with an artificial body and an electronic brain who pretends to be a doll.” (Quote from “Ningyo no Tabi,” **Neppu**, Studio Ghibli)

Oshii and Suzuki Reunited

text by CHIKASHI SAITOH

text by CHIKASHI SAITOH

Mamoru Oshii and Toshio Suzuki collaborate to make a blockbuster

The newest Mamoru Oshii film, produced by Studio Ghibli's Toshio Suzuki, is garnering worldwide attention. Suzuki is a pro at marketing movies, and has led a number of Hayao Miyazaki's films to success. Back when Suzuki was a magazine editor, he recognized Oshii's talent, which he thinks is equal to the likes of Miyazaki and Isamu Takahata. Oshii and Suzuki worked together once before, on the film *Tenshi no Tamago*, but because of their "fundamentally different philosophies of filmmaking," they eventually parted ways [*Invitation*, Pia, July 2003]. Mitsuhsa Ishikawa, president of Production I.G, asked to have Suzuki on this project, despite the possible risks, because *Innocence* is expected to be the best from Production I.G to date, and Ishikawa

wanted Suzuki's help in making the film a commercial success. Ishikawa says, "Mr. Suzuki will be our most powerful weapon, but at the same time, our greatest difficulty." Suzuki, for his part, was inspired by Ishikawa and Oshii's enthusiasm for the new project and decided to work with them again.

In addition to using dolls as the theme of *Innocence*, Oshii also wanted to try a new filmmaking approach with this project. Oshii says, "Supposing the job of animators is to give life to illustrations, which don't have any soul, then what would it be like to present a soulless object as it is—without a soul? That would be an exciting challenge" ["Ningyō no Tabi," *Neppu*, Studio Ghibli]. No one has taken on this groundbreaking challenge in either anime or live-action movies, according to Oshii. On the

other hand, thanks to Toshio Suzuki, Ishikawa has learned the necessary commitment and successful strategies to create a hit film. "I had to switch my thinking and forget about both my position as president and the Production I.G image, in order to focus on making this film. I thought I'd been doing so all along, but the division [between company work and creative work] was even sharper while I was working with Mr. Suzuki," says Ishikawa. Oshii says, "Although the roles of producer and director are different, we both understand each other equally. [Suzuki] is the only guy with whom I can share that type of environment" [*Ace Tokunoh*, Kadokawa Shoten, Issue 2]. With a unique theme and an ambitious strategy, this film is poised to hit theaters around the world and become an acid test for the anime industry.



Tenshi no Tamago

On sale now in Japan
from GENEON ENTERTAINMENT

In a partially submerged city, a boy searching for a specific type of bird meets a girl who cradles an egg. The movie doesn't have a concrete storyline—it was meant to show something other than a story through illustrations of an artistically designed city and various objects.



Akai Megane
("Red Spectacles")

Mamoru Oshii's Cinema Trilogy is on sale now in the US from Bandai Entertainment.

This low-budget movie was Oshii's first live-action undertaking. It starred his old friend, voice actor Shigeru Chiba. The set for this bizarre drama seems like a live theater stage set, and ingeniously represents Oshii's theme of "imagination vs. reality."



Kido Keisatsu Patlabor Gekijoban
 ("Patlabor 1—The Movie")

On sale now in the US
from Manga Entertainment

This was the first pure entertainment film Oshii had made in a long time. It shocked audiences with a new kind of criminal who commits suicide at the beginning of the movie. The well-balanced humor and philosophical elements make this film highly regarded by both fans and critics.



Kerberos—Jigoku no Banken
("Stray Dog")

Mamoru Oshii's *Cinema Trilogy* is on sale now in the US from Bandai Entertainment. Oshii's second live-action movie is a sequel to *Red Spectacles*. The film was shot in a part of Taiwan that resembles 1950s Japan. The last gunfight scene wowed many gun fanatics and showed off Oshii's dynamic directorial style.



Kido Keisatsu Patlabor 2 the Movie
("Patlabor 2—The Movie")

On sale now in the US
from Manga Entertainment

This sequel was created in response to the huge success of the first movie. The animation, art and photography are of such high quality that some say it's one of Oshii's best films.



Mitsuhsa Ishikawa

Mitsuhsa Ishikawa was born in Tokyo in 1958. After working at Tatsunoko Production, he founded I.G. Tatsunoko in 1987, which was renamed Production I.G. in 1993. He is currently the company president.

Extreme but beautiful—behind the creation of the anime in *Kill Bill*

If you pay attention to the opening credits of *Kill Bill: Volume 1*, you'll notice a credit for "Anime Sequence Production: Production I.G." Despite Production I.G.'s relatively brief participation in the ten-minute animated sequence, it was listed in the opening credits—a space usually reserved for the main staff. President of Production I.G. Mitsuhsa Ishikawa says he was very impressed to see it.

"Our contract didn't say that our credit would be listed in the opening sequence. I didn't expect it to happen because I knew it was a lot to ask. So I was very impressed when I actually saw our company's name. Tarantino told us that the anime part would be significant, and he was serious about integrating it into his movie instead of just adding it in as a colorful embellishment. The resulting opening credit may have been a reflection of his gratitude about the anime scenes having exceeded his expectations."

The anime portrays the background of O-Ren Ishii (played by Lucy Liu), the archenemy of The Bride (Uma Thurman). O-Ren's story is full of fury—her parents are murdered right before her eyes. Their deaths result from an internal conflict among the yakuza, whom she exacts revenge upon a few years later. Drawn in a rough, sketchy style, the anime was effective in depicting the fury of her life.

Ishikawa asked Kazuto Nakazawa, who at the time was working as character designer and chief animation director for *Samurai Champloo*, to direct the anime sequence in *Kill Bill: Volume 1*. Nakazawa was going to decline at first, but he later accepted the job after hearing Ishikawa's fervent request. Character designs were done by Katsuhito Ishii of the movie *Samehada Otoko to Momojiri Onna* and Sho-u Tajima, author of the manga *MPD Psycho*. Ishii designed the young O-Ren, while Tajima designed her as an adult. When Ishikawa saw the two characters side by side, he worried that they didn't look like the same person. However, Tarantino approved them, saying they were fine because visual impact was more important than the characters' resemblance.

When Tarantino commissioned the anime, he gestured to indicate how the action scenes should flow and even described them by rolling around on the floor. Nakazawa drew the storyboards based on Tarantino's lively description, and the finished anime is a frenzied reflection of that energy.

Hollywood

KILL BILL

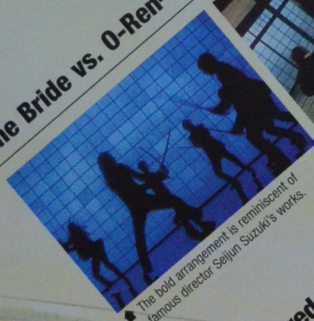


● VOLUME 2 SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 2004 THEATRICAL RELEASE IN THE US FROM MIRAMAX FILMS

► www.kill-bill.com/

illustrated by SHO-U TAJIMA
text by CHIKASHI SAITO, KENJI TAKIGAWA
Images courtesy of Miramax Film Corp.

The Bride vs. O-Ren—the art of Tarantino-style swordplay explodes!



► The bold arrangement is reminiscent of famous director Seijun Suzuki's works.



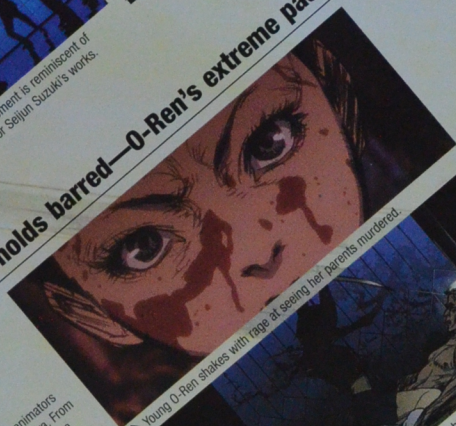
► Intense wire action



► The last fight is held in an authentic Japanese environment.

The action scenes can be described as kung fu with Japanese swords in the movie. The swords used by The Bride and O-Ren are handcrafted by Sonny Chiba, and are superior to any sword carried by members of the street gang.

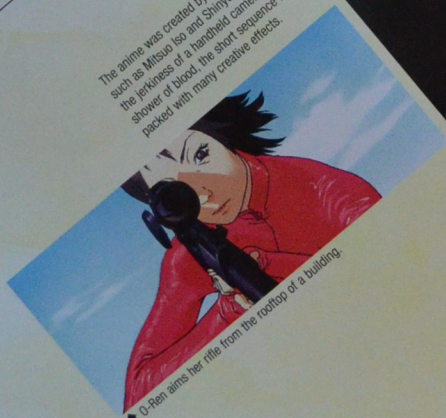
No holds barred—O-Ren's extreme past



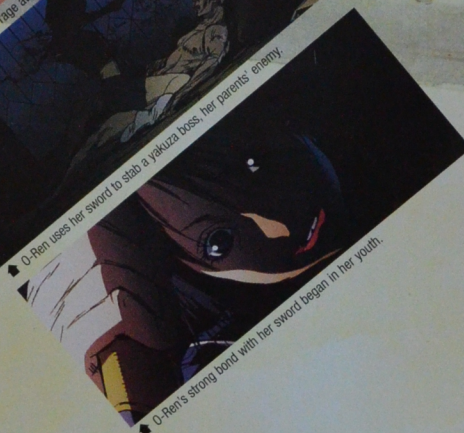
► Young O-Ren shakes with rage at seeing her parents murdered.



► O-Ren uses her sword to stab a yakuza boss, her parents' enemy.



► O-Ren aims her rifle from the rooftop of a building.



► O-Ren's strong bond with her sword began in her youth.



Tarantino visits Japan!

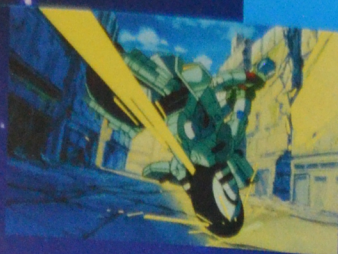
Tarantino and producer Lawrence Bender visited Japan and met several times with Ishii. (Photo was taken at the US production site.)

O-Ren Ishii

O-Ren used to be a world-class sniper. The new artwork on this page was done by Sho-u Tajima, the character designer.



I.G Goes



Robotech: Evolution of a Legacy

Let's play a parlor game. Say you have to pick the one shining and defining moment when anime made an Earth-shattering impact on the United States. Obviously, you've got quite a few contenders. There's *Akira*. There's *Battle of the Planets*. Or *Voltron*. You could even argue that Columbia House's heavily advertised "Animation from Japan" collection of a few years ago got a lot of attention. But when it comes right down to it, one saga doth bestride the American consciousness like a colossus. Hardcore fans worship it. Casual fans respect it. Even staunch non-fans have heard of it. If there's a winner, it must be *Robotech*.

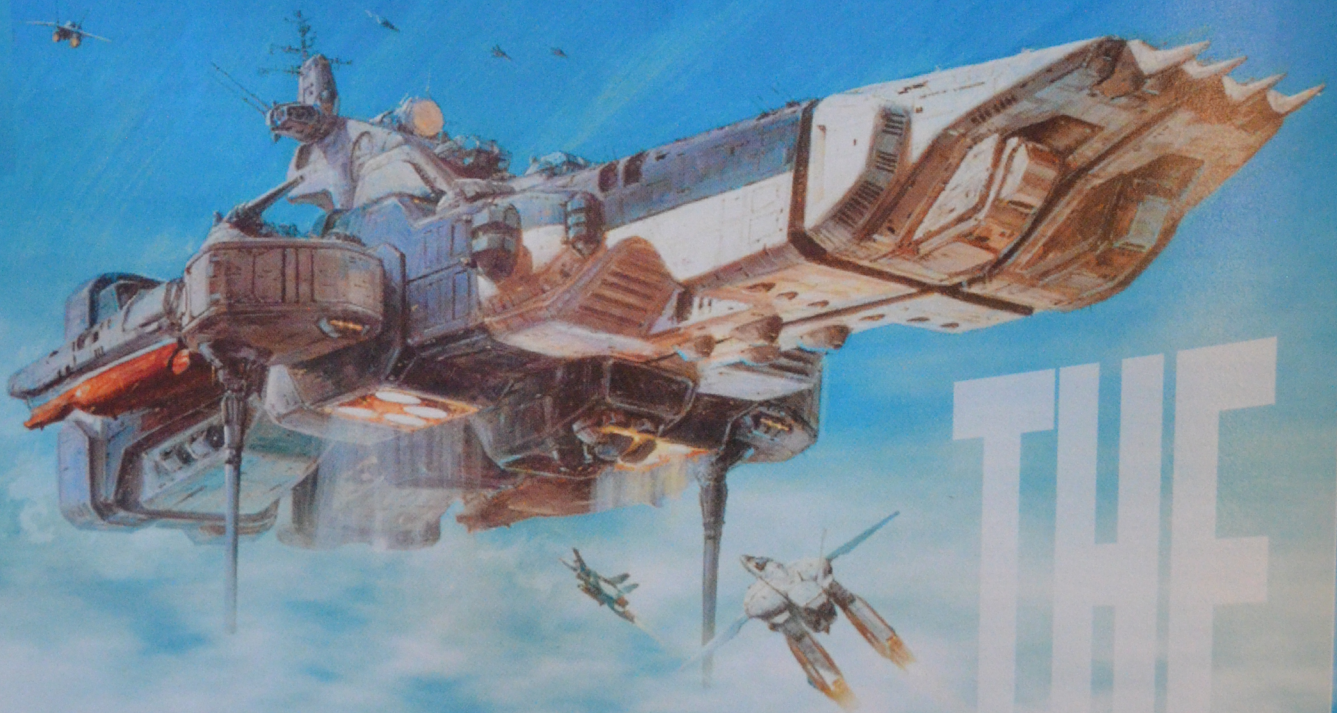
Robotech comes off as one of those series that people recall with the sparkling clarity of an honest-to-god historical event. Many fans can actually tell you exactly where they were when they saw it for the first time. When it arrived on American syndicated television in 1985, weeks of commercials led up to its debut; it created excitement just by the mere quality of animation, even if you weren't familiar with any of the back story at all. In some US outlets, it only aired at 6 a.m.; there were stories of

kids getting up, hitting the record button on VHS or Beta, and catching more Zs before school. It was an immediate phenomenon among the animation and sci-fi faithful.

Born from a family of Japanese sci-fi of the late '70s and early '80s that was greatly influenced by George Lucas' *Star Wars* (*Gundam* and the works of Leiji Matsumoto chief among them), the original Japanese source of *Robotech*, the *Macross* franchise, not only birthed the popularity of the pop idol in anime and set a new precedent for mecha designs but also constructed the framework for a 20-year worldwide legacy. In fact, in 2002 *Macross* celebrated its 20-year anniversary. Now, NTUSA is touching on the legacy of its distinctly American incarnation with a look at *Robotech's* history, including the advent of the *Robotech* anime; US published comics; and related Stateside merchandise since 1985. With a perpetual barrage of forthcoming merchandise from various distributors and the release of the *Robotech Remastered: Extended Edition* from ADV Films, touting retouched art and additional scenes, there's an opportunity for fans to experience anew or simply revisit this seminal series.

text by TROY BROWNFIELD

BIG GAME



THE



What Now?

Rumors constantly persist of new **Robotech** series. A proposed CG series, *Robotech 3000*, drew sharp and derisive comments from fans for deviating from the traditional anime spirit of **Robotech**. After money issues flared up with the CG company, it was announced that a new, more familiar-looking series would be produced by Harmony Gold under the working title of **Robotech 2004**; at this time, there's nothing solid to confirm.

One certainty is that **Robotech** remains a watershed moment in anime history. It's the type of universe that will constantly draw in new fans and demand active exploration. Whatever your feelings about the American recasting of the original versions, the various tales are inextricably bound together as part of the same phenomenon. A true landmark in the realms of animation, TV and science fiction, **Robotech** will continue to be honored, reinvented and followed deep into the very future that the show itself tried to predict. In a real way, the alien technology did conquer the world, and it left anime fandom much better for it. And, just as it touched anime and sci-fi fans through TV and video, **Robotech** has a captivating track record in the US comics business. In the following pages we'll take a look at the **Robotech** comics and their place in the grand scheme.

In the **Robotech Masters** saga, Hunter returns, this time searching for the Robotech Masters on their own planet. Unfortunately, said Masters are busy attacking Earth. So the essential protagonist becomes Dana Sterling, the child of Max and Miriya from **Macross**. Like many star-crossed couples, they first encountered one another as opposing fighters. Subsequently married, they birth Dana, who holds the distinction of being the first human/Zentraedi child. She fights to defend Earth in the Army of the Southern Cross.

New Generation is decidedly more grim. The Masters are defeated, but Earth is conquered by another alien race, the Invid. The Mars Base unit is sent back from Admiral Hunter's Expeditionary Force to face the threat and a sound defeat. Survivor Scott Bernard makes it to Earth and unites with a resistance movement opposing the Invid.

Plot points aside, the root appeal of the series can be traced to its maturity,

characters, and last but not least, its mecha. Frankly, up to this point, no US animated series possessed such intellectual and emotional complexity, and the mature themes were reflected in the characters. Developed more like live actors than cartoonish two-dimensional heroes, the cast resonated with fans. Viewers were emotionally invested in Rick Hunter's romantic entanglement (among other plots) because this was a real attempt to treat the viewer with respect and intelligence.

Of course, the mechs are the "cool factor" that brought a lot of fans to **Robotech**. Designs on the Valkyrie and the SDF-1, for example, were wholly original to the domestic audience, which didn't have anything like **Gundam** for comparison. The impact of the original designs on the US market was incalculable. It's no small testament that modern toy companies can release product based on those ideas and have them disappear from specialty stores today.

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History of a Franchise

The true origins of **Robotech** extend back to 1982, when **Super Dimensional Fortress Macross** made its debut in Japan. The original 36 episodes depicted a war between an alien culture and Earth forces that used elements of the alien technology. The domestic company Harmony Gold became high on the series and optimistic about its chances for US success. They licensed broadcast rights from Tatsunoko, and the first three episodes of **Macross** were actually translated and released as **Robotech** on one direct-to-video tape in 1984; it was later decided that the story should be run daily.

There was a problem: Due to broadcast standards, the company needed 65 episodes, which meant the show could air each weekday for 13 weeks.

It was Harmony Gold producer Carl Macek who developed a unique solution. The company held rights to two other Japanese series, **Super Dimensional Cavalry: Southern Cross** and **Genesis Climber Mospeada**. Harmony Gold had 23 episodes of **Cross** and the 25 episodes of **Mospeada**. Through some clever connections, the three series were merged, giving Harmony Gold a hefty complement of 85 episodes for air.

In addition to story changes and the inclusion narration for the English version, character names were also altered to give the story wider appeal. The most obvious would be Hikaru

Ichijo, whom most fans came to know as Rick Hunter. In retrospect, this is somewhat funny, given that **Robotech** actually debuted on American TV some six months after the debut of NBC's long-running hit cop show **Hunter** (whose first name was, of course, Rick), which itself became a mammoth success in Asia.

The only real discordant note in the title's history is probably the fate of **Sentinels**. The whole **Robotech** enterprise had gone so well that an extension to the initial 85-episode run was certain. Harmony Gold teamed up with Matchbox (who had the US toy license) for a second series tentatively titled **Robotech II: The Sentinels**. Monetary problems felled the completion of this series. On the bright side, a **Robotech II: The Sentinels** DVD can be found in the **Robotech Legacy Boxed Set 3** from ADV Films.

Still, those looking for other anime extensions to the story need look no further than full-length films and OVAs. **Super Dimensional Fortress Macross: Do You Remember Love?** debuted in Japan after the success of the original. **Macross** products have continued to flourish, including such titles as **Macross Flashback 2012**, **Macross II: Lovers Again**, **Macross 7**, **Macross Plus** and the new **Extended Edition**.

Robotech clearly has a rich history, rife with twists and turns, with factions flaring up on so many different sides. All this before you actually sit down to watch a single frame!

Now we know from whence it came, but what's it all about?



Heroes of the first Robotech War units. From left to right: Rick Hunter, Ben Dixon, Roy Fokker, Max and Miriya Sterling



Love, War, and Big Drama

By now you've figured out that the world of **Robotech** stands only as a "created" thing. It melded the original trio of Japanese shows into an ongoing saga that echoes the themes of both the great wars and great war dramas of history.

The opening **Macross Saga** Kicks off at the dawn of the 21st century. An alien craft has crashed on Earth, leading humans to rebuild it and harness its technology. Their efforts to grasp the alien tech pay off as the menacing Zentraedi soon arrive, intent on taking back the vessel and blasting the hell out of everything. The hapless protagonist, Rick Hunter, is a non-military pilot who finds himself in the middle of the mayhem.

Rick represents a familiar archetype in war films and sci-fi alike: the bright-eyed young hero destined to learn the hardships of war. He is soon wrapped up in a love triangle involving his potential dream girl and a fellow ranking officer.



times, be rather amateurish, Antarctic drew ire from fans for not sticking closely enough to established **Robotech** continuity.

Antarctic lost the publishing rights to **Robotech** in 1998 (can anyone keep their hands on this thing?) when Harmony Gold reclaimed all their **Robotech** licenses in preparation for a new animated series. Unlike Comico, Eternity and Malibu, Antarctic continues publishing comics to this day, and is doing just fine, thanks.

For four years after Antarctic lost the license, the series languished in limbo while Harmony Gold prepared to relaunch the **Robotech** franchise as a more focused, cohesive property. But in 2002, the title would ride comic book fans' nostalgic lust for '80s cartoon and toy properties back to the shelves. At 2002's San Diego Comic-Con International, it was announced that the license was sold in a perfect circle to Wildstorm, an imprint of DC Comics—the very first publisher of **Robotech** comics.

Wildstorm's superior production standards meant a quantum leap forward in quality. Harmony Gold creative director Steve Yune teamed with

Noble Causes creator Jay Faerber and artist Long Vo on the first mini-series, **From the Stars**, which tackled early events from **Macross**. Not quite a strict retelling, the series fleshed out different aspects of that story arc.

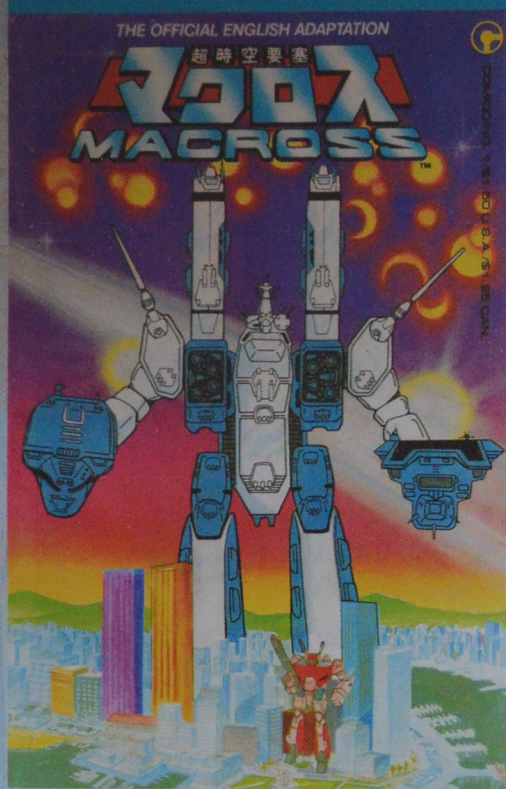
The **From the Stars** creators returned in 2003 for Wildstorm's second **Robotech** series, **Robotech: Love and War**, which examined the romantic subplots in **Macross**. This January saw the launch of the latest **Robotech** mini-series, **Robotech: Invasion**. Set during **New Generation's** war with the Invid, **Invasion** features cover art by Yoshitaka Amano (**Sandman: The Dream Hunter**, **Vampire Hunter D**). Wildstorm has also been reprinting the Comico **Robotech** adaptations in digest-sized graphic novels.

Despite a sometimes tumultuous history, the future looks bright for **Robotech** comics. DC is reportedly very pleased with the success of Wildstorm's releases, ensuring Rick Hunter, Dana Sterling and the rest of **Robotech's** voluminous cast will continue fighting on.

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→ DC Comics relaunched **Robotech** through its Wildstorm label in 2002 with its highest circulation since **Robotech's** debut on television. This copy was signed by the original voice actors of Roy and Claudia.





Comico's first *Macross* comic adaptation in 1984, just prior to the launch of *Robotech*



A rare hardcover edition of the *Sentinels* from Eternity, which held the license from 1994 to 1996

From Macross to New Generation and Beyond: Robotech in Print

text by COREY HENSON

So you know about the anime, but did you know that *Robotech* has spawned hundreds of vastly different comic books over two decades? While lacking the impact of their animated counterparts, *Robotech* comics have a compelling US history.

The first licensee of *Robotech* comic books was DC Comics, which released *Robotech Defenders* in 1984. Written by Andrew Helfer with art by Judith Hunt and Mike Manley, the two-issue series was based on a line of *Robotech* model kits and confusingly isn't part of Harmony Gold's franchise of the same name.

The first comics actually based on the *Robotech* animated series came courtesy of the now-defunct Comico, perhaps best known as the publisher of Dave Stevens' *Rocketeer* and Matt Wagner's *Grendel*. They adapted each episode from the three acts of *Robotech* (*The Macross Saga*, *Robotech Masters* and *New Generation*) into comic form in three separate titles, at times borrowing elements from a lengthy series of *Robotech* novels written under the name Jack McKinney from Del Rey.

Macross, which was arguably the most popular of the storylines, acted as Comico's flagship title for the *Robotech* line in April 1985. Carl Macek, architect of the *Robotech* franchise and the animated series' story editor, wrote the first three issues. Following Macek's stint was Jack Herman, who would write *Macross* until Markalan Joplin took over with Issue 17. (Joplin would tragically die at age 32 shortly after completing *Macross* Issue 36, the adaptation of the final *Macross* episode.)

Robotech Masters debuted in July 1985. At the title's helm sat Mike Baron, the Eisner-award-winning co-creator (with artist Steve Rude) of *Nexus*. Due to *Masters'* strong ties to *Macross*, Comico decided to adapt the series from the second episode, for fear of spoiling intertwined plot points. Following *Robotech Masters* #23, the final issue of the series, Comico adapted the first episode of the animated version in a double-sized special issue, *Robotech Masters: Dana's Story*, with Joplin handling the scripting duties instead of Baron.

Robotech: New Generation also hit in July 1985 and was based on

the final act of *Robotech*. Macek wrote the first issue, with Jack Herman taking over on the second issue and writing until Joplin took over with Issue 13.

In August 1986, Comico released *Robotech: The Graphic Novel*. Written by Macek and Baron, with art by Neil Vokes, the special served as a prequel to *Robotech* and detailed the events surrounding the crash-landing of the SDF-1. A year later saw the release of *Robotech in 3-D*, a second adaptation of the first episode of *Robotech*.

Comico closed its doors in 1990 after failed efforts at newsstand distribution.

In November 1988, Eternity Comics (Malibu Publishing Group) began a long relationship with *Robotech* with the first issue of *Robotech II: The Sentinels*. Though only three episodes of its animated counterpart were completed, the series lived on in comic book form based on adaptations of unproduced scripts and the novelizations.

Eternity published several different titles based on *Robotech II*, including mini-series like *CyberPirates* and *Wedding Special*. Other *Robotech* titles included *Robotech*

Genesis: The Legend of Zor and *Return to Macross*.

Though it had a decent run, Malibu, after a change in direction, was bought by Marvel Comics and ultimately ceased to exist.

Academy Comics picked up the banner where Eternity left off by publishing stories based on *The Sentinels*. Jason and John Waltrip, brother artists who worked for Eternity, wrote and drew the new titles. *Return to Macross* also continued at Academy beginning with Issue 13. In addition, they published a heap of mini-series and one-shots under the *Robotech* umbrella like *Academy Blues*, *MechAngel* and *Mordecai*.

In the wiggly world of comics, Academy eventually lost the rights to *Robotech* in 1996, and the company went out of business shortly thereafter.

Post-Academy, *Robotech* found a new publishing home in 1997 at Antarctic Press. During their short time with the license, they published a color *Robotech* anthology and several minis and one-shot specials. While the production quality of their comics was a big improvement over Academy's, which tended to, at



The Skullone is poised to blast through an army of Zentraedi. Also from Toynami's "Super Poseable" line.



(for 12" figures), a Cyclone bike and the Invid Shock Trooper set.

Approaching the property from a different side of the equation, Revell opted to license models. Some of Revell's models, which included different versions of the Valkyries and other mecha from completely unrelated Japanese shows, were the first to boast the **Robotech** name.

For various reasons, these early **Robotech** toys never became much of a US hit.

However, many **Robotech** designs got a second run on the toy shelves in the '90s under the banner *ExoSquad*. Playmates, known primarily for *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Star Trek*, had this cyber-heavy line,

which was based on a short-lived animated series. **Robotech** designs were used to supplement the show's merchandising.

What Else Have You Got?

Over the intervening years, **Robotech** product has expanded. Though toys and models remain the staples in Japan, there's always room for a vast number of other items. Perhaps the most beloved are the lengthy series of **Robotech** novels. Penned by Brian Daley and James Luceno under the pen-name Jack McKinney, the various volumes helped add to the characterization and explain certain elements of the series. When there's the slightest divergence be-



The Masterpiece editions come packaged handsomely for bookshelf display.



tween the books and the anime, many fans actually believe that "McKinney" holds the canonical view.

Another hugely popular facet of the **Robotech** machine was the role-playing game from Palladium. The sourcebooks provide excellent overviews of the entire universe.

Video gamers can also rejoice. Recent years have seen the debut of a truly spectacular game on a variety of platforms: **Robotech: Battlecry**, which spans PS2, Xbox and GameCube. And for purveyors of the Game Boy Advance, there's **Robotech: The Macross Saga**, a side-scrolling shooter that draws its story from the first arc.

Here and Now

To say that **Robotech** has made a merchandising comeback in the US would be selling it short. Evidenced by Harmony Gold's official site, robotech.com, fans can find everything from the ADV DVDs to shirts and caps, mouse pads and coffee mugs, trading cards and soundtracks.

The grand champion of current **Robotech** merchandise is the mech line from Toynami. Forever exorcising

the ghost of licensing deals past, Toynami has presented stellar transforming Veritech fighters. The basic "Super Poseable" line includes custom versions of Rick, Max, Miriya and Skull Leader's crafts, with a VF-1A tossed in for good measure. Toynami touts several other lines including Super Deformed renditions, mini-busts, beautiful larger-scaled and boxed Masterpiece editions, and the insanely huge 1:12 Super Scale versions of the Veritechs (that's over five feet tall. Seriously.).

Though it's long had competition from other quarters on TV, on video and in other forms, **Robotech** endures through quality merchandise and a committed fanbase. With rumors continuing to swirl about a possible new series, a fresh tide of items bearing the likenesses of Earth's attackers and defenders will no doubt manifest. Time and toil have proven one thing: **Robotech** might not be the most popular cultural event of a given minute, but it's built to last.

RoboMerch: Toys, Models and Robotech Gear

text by TROY BROWNFIELD

Any pop culture phenomenon worth its salt comes with accoutrements that allow fans to display devotion. **Robotech** is no exception. With the initial landing in the States in the mid-'80s, **Robotech** toys became a stealth hit. They were beloved icons of a cult success that laid the seeds for the burgeoning love of anime Stateside.

Recently, with ADV Films driving the series back into awareness with prolonged DVD releases, other companies have seized the moment. **Robotech** toy history has had some ups and downs, but it points to a higher ground.

Jetfire: A Traitor in the Ranks?

Even though Harmony Gold had the foresight to license **Super Dimensional Fortress Macross**, **Super Dimensional Cavalry: Southern Cross** and **Genesis Climber Mospeada** for airing in the States as **Robotech**, domestic toy giant Hasbro actually beat them to the punch with one key item. Bandai had the license to make **Macross** items in Japan; Hasbro bought the rights to use the Valkyrie likeness for a character in their **Transformers** line of toys.

That Valkyrie design became the Transformer called Jetfire. The irony is that while Hasbro's toy perfectly encapsulated the design ethos of **Macross** and **Robotech**, it was seen by the US consumer as another smart piece of the **Transformers** puzzle. A hilarious side-note is that when the character first appeared on the cartoon, he wasn't sure what team he should be on. It's almost a tacit acknowledgement that **Robotech's** most striking visual design had been co-opted before getting a chance to make its own impression. Sadly, this also prevented Matchbox from making transforming Veritechs at the time due to licensing issues.



Matchbox, Models and Exo-Squad

The Jetfire situation might be the most easily explained component of all the **Robotech** items that received a domestic release. Things get generally clouded when you factor in the notion that some toy companies were licensing rights from Japanese toy companies on the original lines for use in different American lines. On top of that, Harmony Gold struck their own deal with Matchbox to merchandise certain aspects of the franchise. What you end up with are a number of look-alikes, imports and odd American products.

Probably the most familiar of the American **Robotech** lines would be the basic assortments of action figures and vehicles by Matchbox. Known primarily as a maker of tiny collectible cars, Matchbox no doubt saw the synergy in applying that skill to robots and transforming vehicles.

The meat of the Matchbox line were the action figures, produced in both

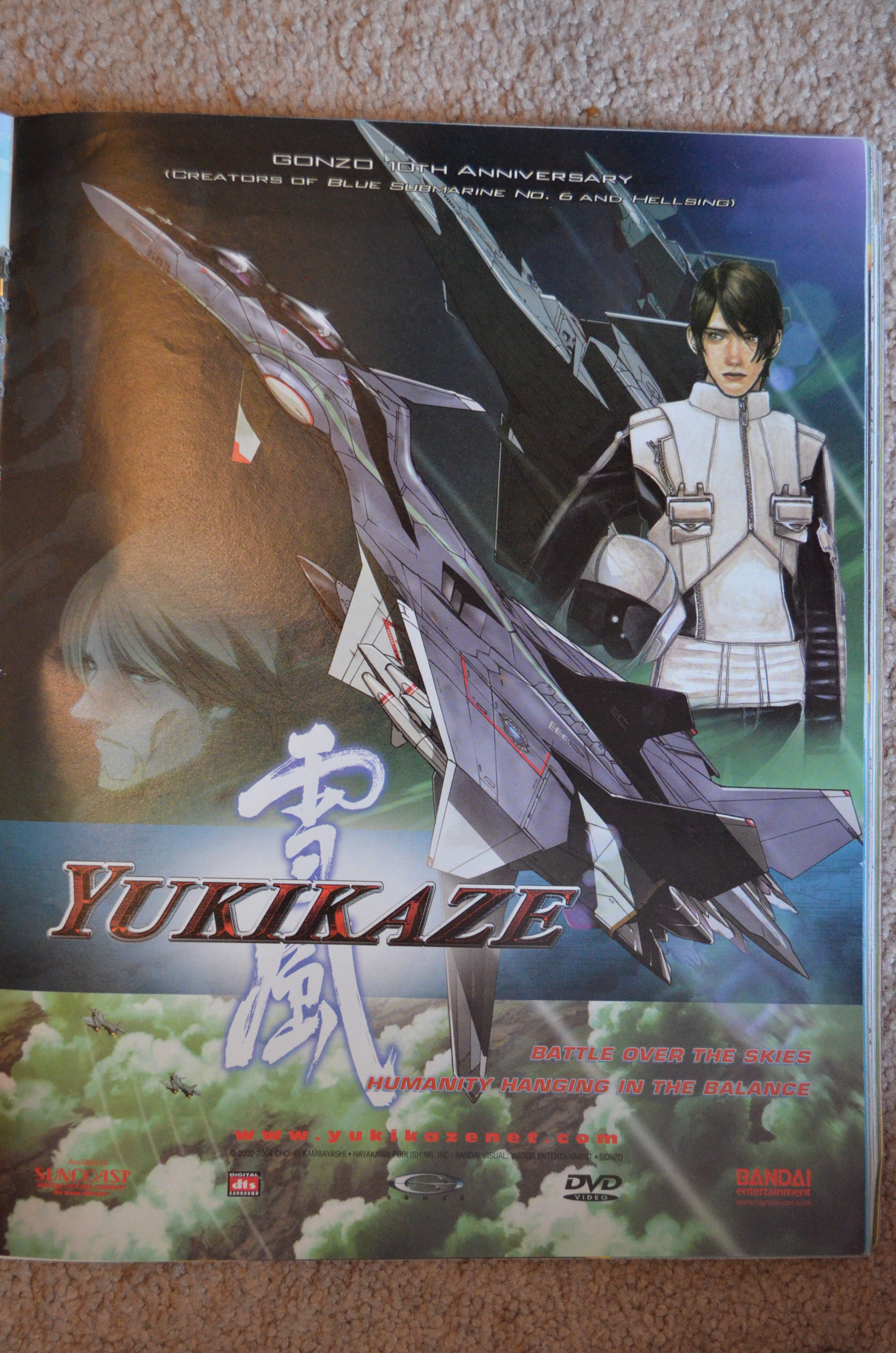
the 3-3/4" scale that was the order of the day, and in a 6" scale to reflect larger characters. The base figure size offered compatibility with various vehicles and resembled the jointed, poseable appearance of Hasbro's '80s **G.I. Joe** line. Among the figures were series staple characters like Rick Hunter, Lisa Hayes, Miriya, Dana Sterling and Scott Bernard, and in the six-inch line, various aliens. In addition, Matchbox did a small line of 12" fashion dolls. The archetypal love triangle of the show (Rick Hunter, Lisa Hayes and Lynn Minmei) was represented, allowing equal play time for girls and young men who had more concern for plot issues and character development than fight scenes.

Still, the big draw would be the mecha. Unable to build transforming Veritechs, Matchbox nonetheless made some champion versions of the jet in regular fighter mode. Other vehicles in the line included the Battlepod, the Hovercycle

The VF-1 takes aim! These "Super Poseable" figures from Toynami are among the most popular with collectors.



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illustrated by SHINO MASANORI

color & painted by YOSHIMI KOSHIKAWA

special effects & finished by KUMIKO TANIGUCHI

text by SHOTARO MIYA

©RED / PROJECT GUNGRAVE

STAFF creator: RED ENTERTAINMENT;

original conception & character design:

YASUHIRO NIGHTOW; series organization:

YOSUKE KURODA; director: TOSHIYUKI

TSURU; animation production: MADHOUSE

CAST Beyond the Grave / Brandon Heat:

TOMOKAZU SEKI; Harry Macdowel: KENJI

HAMADA (youth) & TSUTOMU ISOE (adult)

STORY Desperate to escape the slums,

Brandon and Harry commit themselves to Big

Daddy's massive organization, Millennium,

which maintains a stranglehold over the city.

Background of GRAVE

He was once known as Brandon Heat, but that identity died after Heat was betrayed by his best friend Harry. Resurrected by forbidden technology, Grave became the deadliest of assassins in order to take revenge on Harry, now the head of Millennium. The clash of these two men turns the world into a battleground.

A bullet made of more than lead

No one can stop the Grim Reaper once he launches into action. With "Cerberus," his pair of handguns (named after the guard dogs of hell, Cerberus), anything in his path simply gets mowed down by his overwhelming destructive power.

This Grim Reaper wasn't always a harbinger of death. Before his resurrection, he was Brandon Heat, a man born and raised in the dirtiest slum of a seedy city. Yasuhiro Nightow, who did the character conception for both the original game and this work, describes him as "clumsy and simple-minded, but tough through and through—obstinate." In the first half of **GUNGRAVE**, we follow this "clumsy" man as he ascends to the pinnacle of power, is betrayed, falls, and is then reborn as the bullet-blasting Beyond the Grave.

A wide range of emotion is packed into the hot lead of Grave's deadly bullets. Along with the remaining bits of his gentle humanity, those bullets also express the ferocious anger of a man betrayed—his resentment and desire for revenge. Anger carries him forward, as inexorable as a river of hot magma. Where will it take him?

Nightow says, "I get excited thinking about how much emotion I can load into each shot fired during the battles in the second half [of the series]." There's deeper meaning to the rain of bullets fired by this Grim Reaper, and that's what **GUNGRAVE** intends to portray. These bullets carry a heavy load as they fly across the sky and punch straight through to the hearts of the audience.

It's too late for anyone to stop the Grim Reaper. All we can do is surrender.



His beloved handguns are known as "Cerberus," and each bears the silver and gold emblem of a cross. He holds one in each hand, and on his back he carries a giant coffin. His overwhelming destructive power makes him more terrifying than death to his enemies.

A **bility** of **GRAVE**

C **haracter** of **GRAVE**

You can imagine how reckless Grave is by seeing him single-handedly taking on Millennium, a huge organization that controls the underworld. "He matter-of-factly takes on the worst jobs," Nightov says, "but he's kind enough to stand up for the weak."

Beyond the **Grave**

Propelled by his hatred for the organization that betrayed him, he returned to life from "beyond the grave" to become an immortal assassin. Putting his pride on the line to go up against the organization, his terrifying form resembles the Grim Reaper. But there is more to him than just hatred.

The **Man Who Conquered Death**

Rei Fukai

Nihilistic and cold, Rei is criticized for his robotic mannerisms. However, when he finishes a mission and returns to base, he briefly shows a more human side to his handful of friends.

1. Operation II

Volume 2 highlights another theme of the show—the interaction between humans and machines. The *Yukikaze* is modified to be an unmanned fighter. How does it communicate with humans?



2. Fairy Tale

Manga artist Yumi Tada worked on character conception for the show. However, her involvement doesn't end with the visuals. She's also credited as a scriptwriter, and her sensitivity as a writer enriches the story.

3. Music That Flies

The background music by the duo the KANI rocks, while the ending theme "RTB" was sung by Japanese music guru Monsieur Kamayatsu.

4. Sentou Yousei [Combat Fairy]

The highlights of the show are the aerial combat scenes, with 3-D graphics enhanced by cel-shading to create a 2-D appearance. The fighter maneuvers will leave you speechless.



5. Face-Off

The biggest mystery of the show is the true identity of the enemy known as the JAM. They don't negotiate or make demands—they only attack. The fact that their objectives are unknown is very frightening.



6. Fiction and Reality

The fighter designs are very realistic, even compared to actual fighters. There are of course some exaggerations, but they're almost unnoticeable, thanks to mecha designer Ikuto Yamashita's dedication and love for his work.

YUKIKAZE

VOLUME 1 AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 2004
IN THE US FROM BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT

► <http://www.yukikazenet.com/>

illustrated by KOUICHI HASHIMOTO
finished by ERIKO MURATA, SHIN INOIE
background by BIHOU
text by YUKIO KINO

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STAFF creator: CHOHEI KANBAYASHI (original work published by Hayakawa Shobo); director: MASAHICO OHKURA; organization & script: HIROSHI YAMAGUCHI; script: YUMI TADA & MASAHICO OHKURA; character design: YUMI TADA; mechanical design: IKUTO YAMASHITA & SEIJI KIO; music: SATOSHI MISHIBA & DOUGEN SHIONO (the KANI); ending theme: MONSIEUR KAMAYATSU; special assistance: JAPAN AIR SELF-DEFENSE FORCE

CAST Rei Fukai: MASATO SAKAI; James Bulkar: GEORGE NAKATA; Lynn Jackson: SHOKO IKEDA; Rydia Cooley: YOKO ASAGAMI

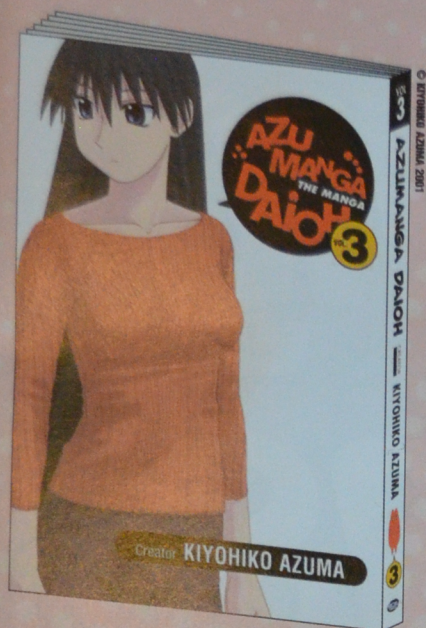
STORY Humans on Planet Fairy established a strong air force base to fight alien invaders known as the JAM. Thirty-three years later, both sides have been dragged into the morass of war.



Returning To Base

Returning to Base— words that can change your perspective

"Returning to base" (commonly abbreviated as "RTB") is what a pilot says right before heading back to base after the completion of a mission. The term "Engaging" signals that the pilot is about to attack the enemy. Both phrases are commonly used in shows of this genre, but the latter tends to crop up more often in anime that incorporate aerial combat scenes. However, *Sentou Yousei Yukikaze* ("Yukikaze") is different. The *Yukikaze* and its pilot Rei are under orders to collect information and bring it back to base safely. In order to accomplish their mission, they're allowed to abandon friendly planes. In a sense, that's a cruel mission. If you don't help your friends, then how can you expect them to want to protect you in return? Unfortunately, the *Yukikaze* is forced to follow an old battlefield rule and assume that everyone in the surrounding area is a potential adversary and should be regarded as hostile. This assumption is significant in a show like this that focuses on communication. If you believe you're surrounded by enemies, it's difficult to imagine how you should communicate with them. But as soon as you signal "RTB," at least half of the targets cease to be enemies, because you've explicitly identified one part of the world (the base) as friendly. Thus, "RTB" is a phrase that can change your whole perspective, as it does for the *Yukikaze*.



The girls of Azumanga Daioh enter their senior year, which marks the return of the sports meet. Will Osaka succeed in her resolution to get faster? Will Kaorin ever let go of Sakaki? The competition gets heated in Volume 3!

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Kaname Chidori is back, and just trying to be an ordinary high school student, but she is constantly under the watchful eye of Sosuke. A spark is developing between these two, but there's trouble in paradise when a beautiful exchange student arrives and catches Sosuke's attention...

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Tsubasa, a shy girl who has just moved to Hokkaido with her father, witnesses an extraordinary event one night—a UFO falls from the sky and lands practically at her feet! Pretty soon, she is fighting off space monsters, and she receives help in the most unlikely of forms...



Following a showdown with evil, Kyoya and Sayaka successfully escape from the horror-filled Babylon Palace. But the terror doesn't end there! Follow Kyoya, Sayaka, and Dr. Mephisto into the hands of evil once again to find out the thrilling conclusion of this action-packed adventure!



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appearance, as Batman and the Monolith team up to take down a mutual enemy. Later on, the Man of Steel visits for a good old-fashioned throwdown, resulting in massive amounts of collateral damage. "We are going to level downtown New York," Palmiotti teases.

Access to familiar characters like Batman and Superman has obvious benefits from a marketing standpoint. "When a book is set in the DCU, the retailers and fans seem to take it more seriously, and sales-wise, that's important," Palmiotti says. "We want this book to be around for a while. Not being in the DCU has hurt our previous titles *21DOWN* and *The Resistance* big time."

The Monolith will pop up in other DCU titles as well. And while *The Monolith* may not seem like a traditional superhero title—the cerebral and mature tone is perhaps more

suited for DC's Vertigo imprint—Palmiotti says he's not worried about the series fitting into DC's core stable of genre titles. "At its core, it's a monster/superhero book to us," he says. "Making a title mature and intelligent, I think, is a plus for a field where the age of the average reader is about 20. It will totally fit in because DC can always use a 'Hulk' type character."

Future storylines may mirror the familiar stories about the golem. In the traditional tales, the golem eventually becomes a menace to the people he's supposed to help, and is destroyed by his creator. Might the Monolith meet the same unfortunate fate?

"Yeah, not so much that he goes rogue, but he starts policing the people around him, and what he considers bad is a gray area," Palmiotti answers. "His creators are forced to destroy him, but they lack the nerve, and that's the heart of the situation."



Memo to wannabe thugs: Crime does not pay—especially when a massive Monolith is waiting in the wings to dispense story justice.

THE MONOLITH

● AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 2004
IN THE US FROM DC COMICS

text by COREY HENSON

© James Palmiotti, Justin Gray
and DC Comics.™ DC COMICS

STONE COLD

This February, a new hero arrives in the DC Universe, when co-writers Jimmy Palmiotti and Justin Gray team up with artist Phil Winslade on **The Monolith**, a massive stone automaton built to protect those who can't protect themselves.

Set in the gritty streets of Brooklyn, **The Monolith** is actually based in part on the well-known Jewish legend of the golem: a stone creature created by the Marharal of Prague, Rabbi Yehuda Loew, to protect the Jews from their enemies.

In the comic series, the Monolith was created under similar circumstances: When the booze-running mobs terrorize the residents of a Brooklyn 'hood in 1932, the Rabbi Rava uses his knowledge of the *Sefer Yetzirah*—the kabbalistic book that's said to explain God's creation of the universe—to create the massive stone golem as a way of fighting back.

Seventy years later, Alice Cohen, a young, troubled woman on the run from a vicious street hustler, discovers the monster living behind a wall in the house she just inherited from her grandmother, who was herself a witness to the golem's creation.

The idea for **The Monolith** first came to Palmiotti when he was in college, taking painting lessons from a private teacher in Brooklyn. "One night after my lesson," Palmiotti says, "he took me to the subbasement in his brownstone and showed me a giant bricked-up tunnel wall." The tunnel extended all the way under the East River to lower Manhattan. The mobs had used it during the Prohibition Era to smuggle booze.

"My imagination went wild, thinking what might still be behind that wall," Palmiotti continues. "I had told Justin the idea—wouldn't it be cool if we did a book where a monster lived behind

the wall, having been imprisoned for the last 60-plus years? He loved the suggestion, and we worked up a story together that takes place in the 1930s and modern day."

"I instantly saw the potential in the story and the setup," says Gray. "The elements of the story and the emotional background of the characters appealed to me greatly."

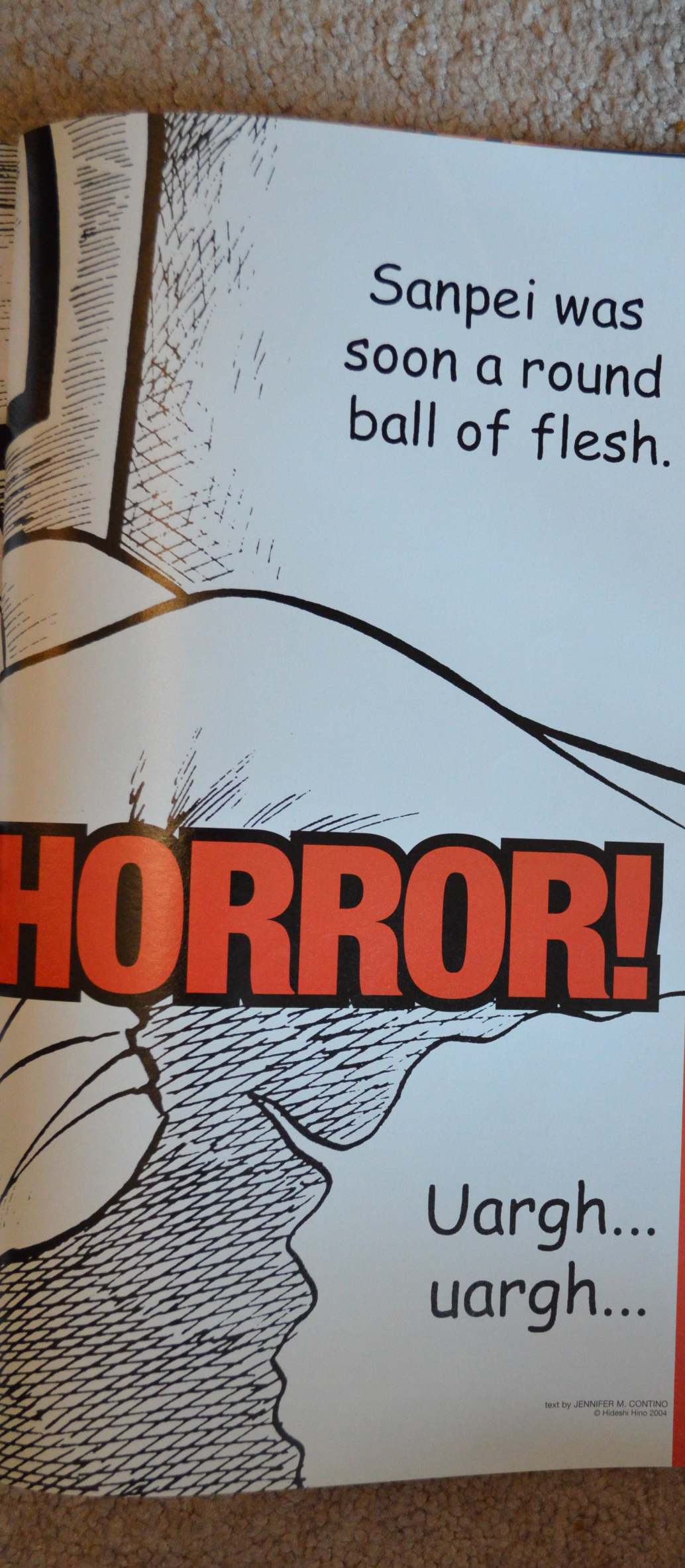
While both Palmiotti and Gray were familiar with the traditional stories about the golem, they still had a lot of research ahead of them. "Research had to be done to the what and why of golems and their place in history," Palmiotti says. "There were a number of golem-type children's tales that came from Russia and Europe, but we had to make ours fit the time and place we were developing."

In order to do that, the duo needed to learn a little about New York circa the Prohibition Era. They researched

historical references and read letters from the time in order to capture the vernacular. Even Winslade got into the act. "He went nuts making sure each and every scene that was a flashback looked and was an authentic representation of that era," Palmiotti raves. "He nailed it...oh, God, did he ever. Wait till you see the second issue. Joe Kubert and Francis Ford Coppola would be proud."

In fact, Palmiotti and Gray seem very proud to be working with the acclaimed artist, who is best known for his work on *Daredevil* and *Howard the Duck*. "Phil is simply brilliant in his style and delivery," Gray says. "I think **Monolith** stands as a perfect example of how to tell a story with images."

Around the fourth or fifth issue, a certain Bruce Wayne will visit New York on business. Before long, his more famous alter-ego makes an



Sanpei was
soon a round
ball of flesh.

HORROR!

Uargh...
uargh...

text by JENNIFER M. CONTINO
© Hideshi Hino 2004

Japanese horror films have placed a hex on Hollywood, but horror manga might be where it's at—frequently serving as the inspiration for phenomenal celluloid offspring. Piggybacking on the Japanese horror buzz and a booming US manga market, cocoro books offers a new line of terrifically terrifying manga.

With its Japanese anime, movie, ninja and cosplay titles, cocoro books (the only imprint of Japan-based DH Publishing) is making a name for itself in otaku circles. And with the publisher gearing up to release horror manga from manga-ka Hideshi Hino, it looks like fans are going to have a lot to be happy about.

The horror genre is relatively untapped in Western circles, with a mere handful of volumes available. Many horror titles have garnered critical attention, with VIZ's *Uzumaki* being nominated for several coveted Western awards, including an Eisner. The folks at cocoro hope the West's love of being terrorized will lead to the success of its March debut of the Hino Horror line. In addition, 2004 will also see the introduction of cocoro's line of Mystery and Secrets Revealed books—a series of "unofficial guides" to popular anime, including *Gundam Wing*, *Dragon Ball Z*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Lupin the Third*. *Dragon Ball Z*, the first release of this new line, will hit the stores in April.

With several Western book publishers expanding into the realm of manga, it makes sense to see a Japanese publisher with ties to the realms of anime and manga doing the same.

Although DH Publishing, Inc. is fairly well known in Japan, the publisher decided to use the cocoro books imprint to "avoid confusion with [Western comics and manga publisher] Dark Horse, a company many refer to as DH," says Clive France, vice president and director of publications.

Japanese Movie Posters: Yakuza, Monster, Pink, and Horror. cocoro books' first title, came out in October 2002. The company has also released other large-format, full-color books such as *Secrets of the Ninja: Their Training, Tools, and Techniques* and *Cosplay Girls: Japan's Live Animation Heroines*. Its most recent release, *Silver Screen Samurai: The Best of Japan's Samurai Movie Posters* (January 2004), is sure to appeal to a



OH, THE

is a chicken and lives in a nest of twigs in her room; his grandfather has a huge boil hanging from the side of his head that must be squeezed regularly and soothed with egg yolk; and his mother, who appears almost normal, is the one that must tend to the grandfather's boil. Much of the house is closed off, and the boy is warned never to look beyond one mirror door, for if it is opened it will unleash a series of terrible events upon the household, heralded by the appearance of a red snake. However, the boy has a dream that he visits the world beyond the door, and when he awakens he realizes, all too late, that it is not only a dream... or is it?"

Although *The Red Snake* contains a lot of blood and guts, France says there's more than gore to the story. "It is the eccentricities of his family, and how these are accentuated once the red snake has been released from beyond the mirror, that makes the tale so terribly disturbing."

The Bug Boy focuses on Sanpei, a quiet, friendless boy who is picked on at school by his classmates and teachers. "His brother and sister are both studious goody-goodies, which means that he is always the brunt of his parents' anger at home," France says. "His only real friends are his pets, whom he houses in a secret den in a junkyard. One evening, after being sent to his room by his ever-angry father, he suddenly throws up. In the pool of sick he discovers a strange looking red bug. He picks it up to get a closer look and it suddenly stings him. From that moment his whole life is turned around, as he grows sicker and sicker, and his body slowly rots away. However, instead of dying, he goes through a transformation which leads to his rebirth as a huge bug."

Naturally, his family is speechless. They decide the only course of action is to poison Sanpei and bury his bug-like body in the backyard. However, Sanpei survives and burrows out and escapes. "He sets out to find a place where he can be happy, and along the way has many adventures," France continues. "However, he discovers mostly a world full of hatred. Eventually he loses all memory of his human past, and with his bug powers takes revenge on a world that has treated him so harshly."

Hino is more than just a masterful horror manga-ka. "Hino has directed a number of horror films that are part of a Japanese horror series known as Guinea Pig," says France. "The most notorious of the series is an HH production entitled *Flower of Flesh and Blood*. It is well-known not only for its extremely graphic murder scene (which is basically the whole story) but for the fact that Charlie Sheen wound up seeing the film and found it so disturbing that he reported it to the FBI as a snuff movie, which led to an investigation and Hino's eventual vindication. Since then, the DVD has included a 'making-of' section just to allay viewers' fears."

As for what's next for cocoro books, France offers: "We recently moved into the film business with our first short film *Chance Meeting* having been released to DVD here in Japan. *Chance Meeting* is a horror film directed by Hart D. Fisher; it was shot entirely on location in Los Angeles, and stars Japanese idol Mitsuho Ohtani. The DVD and accompanying photo book are a collaboration between DHP, Bunkasha and Crime Pays, Inc. We plan to continue this project and are always interested in hearing from budding US-based directors."

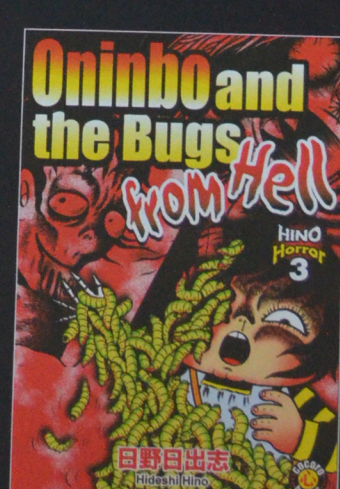
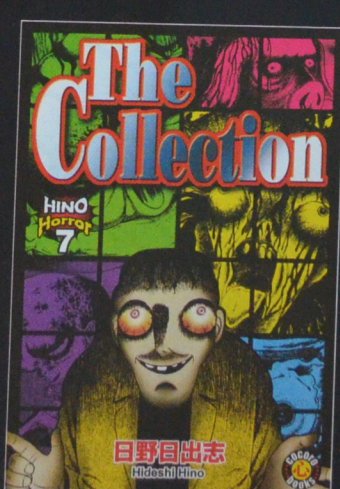
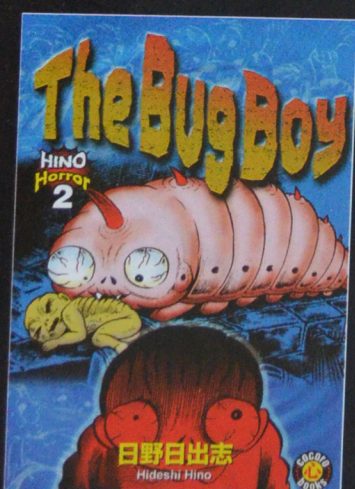
But nobody really knew what was wrong with Sanpei, and he grew sicker and sicker.



His fingers dropped off one by one.



The hand he'd been stung on became soft and sticky, and soon began to rot away.





variety of people, especially with the popularity of the classic *Shogun* mini-series, the Tom Cruise movie *The Last Samurai*, and the success of the anime *Rurouni Kenshin*, to name a few.

The Hino Horror line will debut in March with the release of *The Red Snake* and *The Bug Boy*. Many consider these to be Hino's best works.

Clive France, who's taking on an additional role as translator of the Hino Horror series, doesn't want to spoil the story of *The Red Snake*, but he did reveal a few teaser details of the enigmatic scary story to *Newtype USA*. "*The Red Snake* is a first-person account of a young nameless boy who lives in an old, rambling house surrounded on all sides by dark forest. We're never too sure, however, if the whole story is simply a nightmare. He shares the house with his eccentric family and the chickens that his father raises. His sister spends much of her time playing with the maggots that the hens feed off of; his father is a half-wit who talks to his chickens and butchers the ones he believes are 'broken'; his grandmother thinks she



Tune in for Terror

Various covers from cocoro's forthcoming line of horror comics by Hideshi Hino, available throughout 2004. Considered by critics and fans a master of Japanese horror, Hino has several other works available in English. *Half Baby*, *Panorama of Hell* and various contributions to *Comics Underground Japan* were published in the early to mid-90s by Blast Books. As some of these titles are now out of print, cocoro's line breathes new life into Hino's ghastly masterworks. For more info on Hino's titles and cocoro books, visit the official website at www.dhp-online.com.

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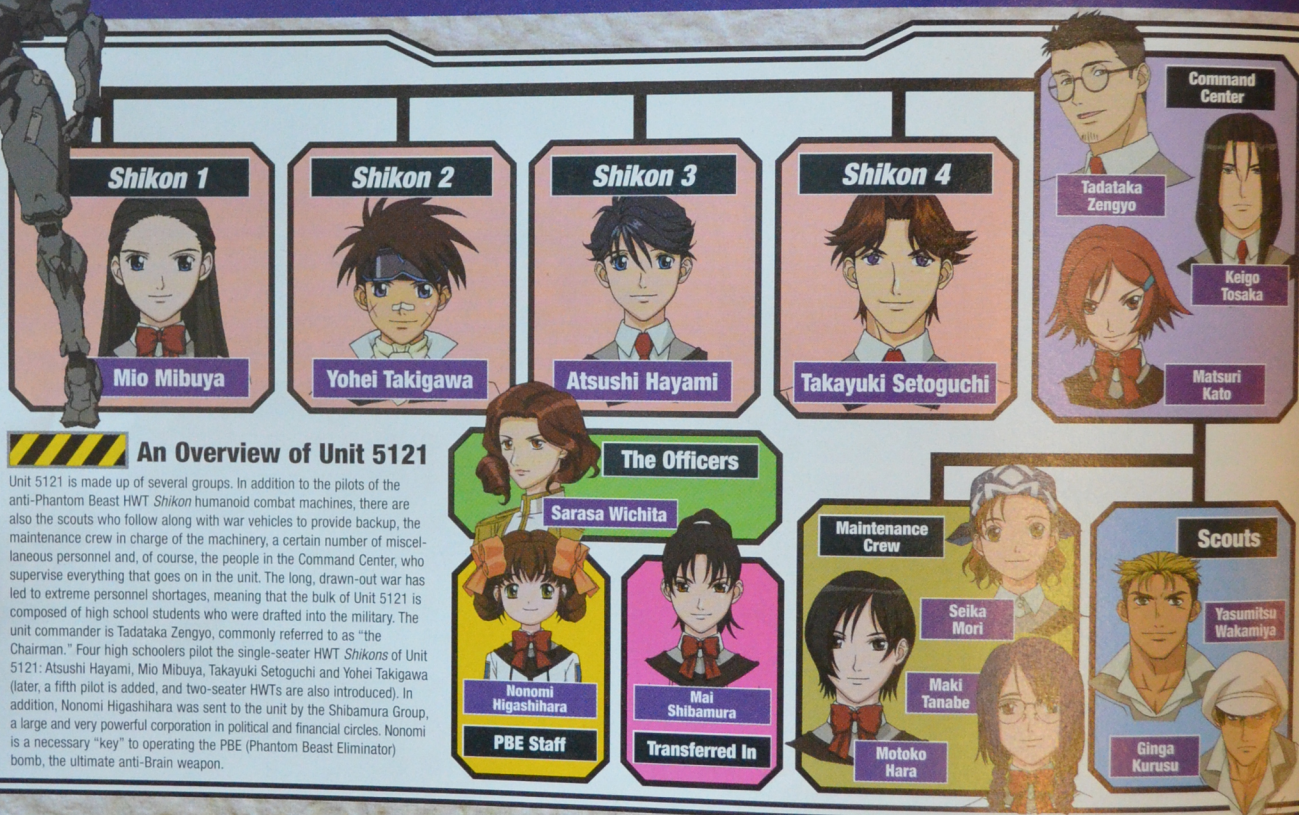
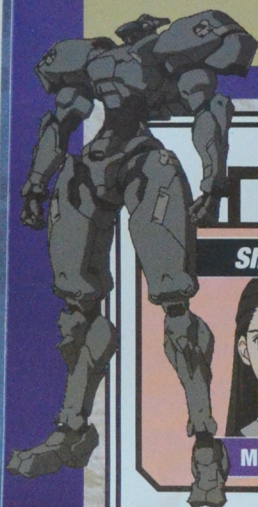
THE OFFICIAL ART of

GUNPARADE MARCH

A COLLECTION OF MATERIALS FROM GUNPARADE MARCH

This anime version of the popular Japanese PlayStation game portrays the battles and day-to-day activities of Unit 5121 in Kumamoto, the site of humankind's last stand against the Phantom Beasts. Many story elements are original to the anime, making this a doubly delicious treat for fans of the game!

STAFF	
Director	Katsushi Sakurabi
Supervisor & Series Organizer	Fumihiko Takayama
Character Design	Yasuhiro Irie
Mechanical Design	Kazunori Iwakura
Animation Production	J.C.STAFF



An Overview of Unit 5121

Unit 5121 is made up of several groups. In addition to the pilots of the anti-Phantom Beast HWT *Shikon* humanoid combat machines, there are also the scouts who follow along with war vehicles to provide backup, the maintenance crew in charge of the machinery, a certain number of miscellaneous personnel and, of course, the people in the Command Center, who supervise everything that goes on in the unit. The long, drawn-out war has led to extreme personnel shortages, meaning that the bulk of Unit 5121 is composed of high school students who were drafted into the military. The unit commander is Tadataka Zengyo, commonly referred to as "the Chairman." Four high schoolers pilot the single-seater HWT *Shikons* of Unit 5121: Atsushi Hayami, Mio Mibuya, Takayuki Setoguchi and Yohei Takigawa (later, a fifth pilot is added, and two-seater HWTs are also introduced). In addition, Nonomi Higashihara was sent to the unit by the Shibamura Group, a large and very powerful corporation in political and financial circles. Nonomi is a necessary "key" to operating the PBE (Phantom Beast Eliminator) bomb, the ultimate anti-Brain weapon.

Operational Area

In 1945, immediately after the end of World War II, strange creatures called Phantom Beasts appeared out of nowhere. Because of the Phantom Beasts, humankind faced the threat of extinction. Roughly half a century has passed since the first invasions, and the majority of the inhabitable areas have been claimed by the hostile intruders. Japan is also threatened, and its people fight for their very lives on the last defense lines in Kyushu. Unit 5121, which Hayami and his friends belong to, is active in operations in the Kumamoto area of Kyushu. The war is going poorly for the humans, with the front lines being pushed back by the Phantom Beasts. Further obscuring their biology and ultimate purpose is the fact that Phantom Beasts vanish without a trace upon death.

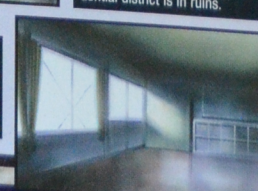


• Kumamoto City

As in the game, the story is set in Kumamoto. As a result of the conflicts between human and Phantom Beast, this residential district is in ruins.

• Shokei High School

Hayami and his friends are both soldiers and students. They normally attend school at this prefab schoolhouse inside the Shokei High campus.



Unit Emblem and Mascot

This Unit 5121 emblem is worn on uniforms and work clothing. It has a yellow band drawn across a blue background, adorned by red stars on each side. In the center is the face of a cat above two crossed rifles. The cat face comes from the stray cat Buta, who hangs around the high school.

• Buta

This stray cat living somewhere on the Shokei High campus has a distinctive holler-than-thou, philosophical-looking expression on its face.

• Unit 5121 Emblem
This unique design was conceived by the members of Unit 5121.





Soldiers in the Tank Corps

The best of the best in the tank corps stand on the front lines in their HWTs—the last line of defense protecting humankind from the daily attacks of the Phantom Beasts.

Mai Shibamura

An HWT pilot who transferred into Unit 5121. This pampered girl from the Shibamura family, which owns the Shibamura Group Corporation, acts as though she doesn't like her classmates, but she sure likes the cat Buta. She's an exceptionally gifted pilot, and holds the top grades in the unit.

These cat-patterned pajamas really don't suit her. She borrowed them from Kato the day she transferred into the unit.

Her expressions

When Mai smiles, she's cuter than you'd expect, considering how cold and aloof she appears.

Mai looks courageous in her uniform shorts. The sleeves are a bit long because she just transferred in and they didn't have her size in stock. Her practical hairstyle matches her attitude.

Pajamas

CHARACTER VOICE
Akemi Okamura

Everyday clothes

These are the civvies she wears off-base during vacations and such.

Atsushi Hayami

The laid-back Atsushi pilots the *Shikon 3*. Everyone in the unit respects his policy of never leaving a fellow soldier behind, as well as his ability to focus in times of crisis. He's pretty zoned out most of the time, though, so behind his back the female soldiers call him a nickname that means "zone boy."

This combat suit is worn exclusively by pilots during battle. There are a few differences between the male and female versions.

Combat suit

Hayami has a gentler personality than the other tank corps members.

His expressions

CHARACTER VOICE
Akira Ishida

Takayuki Setoguchi

Setoguchi pilots the *Shikon 4*, but he has a rather tasteless tendency to write stuff down about the girls he's dated in the notepad he carries with him all the time. He considers himself a player, but his success rate isn't very high.

Pajamas

Even when he's wearing pajamas alone in his room, he looks good.

CHARACTER VOICE
Hideyuki Umetsu

This playboy tries to pick up almost every woman in the unit.

He disarms women with his sincere and clean-cut looks.

His expressions

Mio Mibuya

As a student of ancient martial arts and an excellent swordsman, Mibuya is an expert in close-range combat in her HWT. She's a skilled pilot but a really lousy marksman. She flies into a rage when the others tease her about her low hit ratio.

Pajamas

The blue pajamas she wears in the dorm give off an impression of freshness.

CHARACTER VOICE
Junko Sakuma

Mibuya is rather fastidious, and Setoguchi's flirting infuriates her. It's no surprise she wears martial arts clothing when she's off-duty.

Her brave expressions befit a master of martial arts.

Her expressions

Yohei Takigawa

Yohei, Hayami and Setoguchi have been nicknamed the "Idiot Trio." This spirited young HWT pilot absolutely loves mecha anime, and collects die-cast robots as a hobby. He and Mibuya are good friends, but they always argue.

Sleepwear

Takigawa looks pretty scruffy in his tank-top and rumpled shorts.

CHARACTER VOICE
Akio Suyama

He seems like a grown-up king of the playground. He's overjoyed at piloting a *Shikon* like he's always dreamed.

The scars on his cheeks and the bandage on his nose show how spirited he is.

His expressions

THE OFFICIAL ART of GUNPARADE MARCH

Unit 5121 Gear Mobile Weaponry

In total, four HWT *Shikon* humanoid combat machines are in use by Unit 5121. All of these are single-seater models, meaning they were designed so a single pilot could maneuver, use weapons and process data all at once. In addition to the *Shikon* units, a large transport vehicle (which doubles as a command post) called the CV is part of the standard deployment package. The *Shikon* units are transported to the front lines in this CV. Currently, the addition of a two-seater HWT is being considered as a measure to help deal with the growing threat of Phantom Beast incursions.

ATTENTION!! STRATEGY FOR TOTAL VIEWING PLEASURE

Portrait of Mai Shibamura

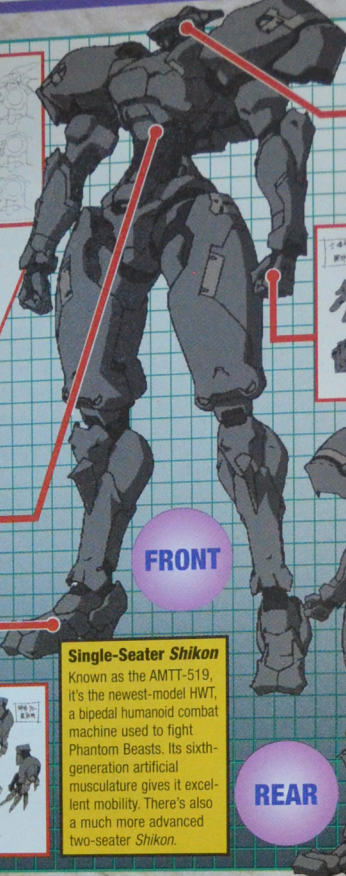
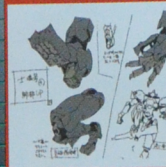
Mai Shibamura is sort of the "hero" of the show, but what kind of hero is she? "As the show progresses, she becomes more and more important to the group, and especially to Hayami. For me she's a difficult character—one who doesn't do what she's told!" The first episode portrays a very harsh reality. What happened to the love comedy elements that made the original game so appealing? "Was it harsh, then? I'm glad it seemed that way. As for the love comedy bits...that's a secret."

Director Katsushi Sakurabi



Cockpit
It's designed for one person to pilot and process data at the same time. The pilot enters through the front hatch.

Feet
The most distinctive feature is the foot claw fashioned at the tips of the feet. It can grip objects with its talons.



FRONT

REAR

Single-Seater Shikon
Known as the AMTT-519, it's the newest-model HWT, a bipedal humanoid combat machine used to fight Phantom Beasts. Its sixth-generation artificial musculature gives it excellent mobility. There's also a much more advanced two-seater *Shikon*.

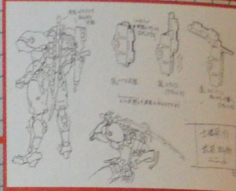


Head Variations

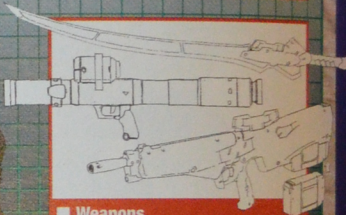
The piece protruding from the back of the head is distinctive. The "face" of the *Shikon* was made to look human.



Precision Manipulators
Manipulators for precise actions project from each wrist. They grow or shrink in six stages, perfect for performing actions too delicate for fingers.



Weapons Attachment Unit
The unit in the rear slides and swings out, allowing easy removal of weaponry.



Weapons

The main weapons include ultra-hard blades and heavy guns like giant assault rifles.

PBE Staff

The valuable personnel who hold the keys to victory

Scouts

These guys play a major role as backup on the battlefield.



Nonomi Higashihara

An "eternal child" created by the Shibamura Group. With her innocent personality, she's adored by the others in the unit. She's also the key to activating the ultimate PBE bomb needed to drive the Brain back.

CHARACTER VOICE

Mayumi Yoshida

She shows the depth of her kindness by looking out for Mai, who only recently joined the unit. She has the appearance and mentality of an eight year old kid.



Nonomi always smiles, no matter what. She's as pure as they come.

Her expressions

Yasumitsu Wakamiya

Among the motley band of boys and girls that make up Unit 5121, this burly scout looks the most soldierly. And he's every bit as hardworking and honest as he looks. He's also an assistant instructor for the pilots.

Wakamiya seems gifted with physical ability. His keen intensity as an instructor is seen during his daily drills to get the pilots in shape.

CHARACTER VOICE

Yoshihisa Kawahara



He watches over the pilots' growth with stern yet kind eyes.

His expressions



Ginga Kurusu

This reticent scout is a man of action. You'll occasionally realize he's not there anymore, only to find him in the corner doing pushups alone. He's partnered with Wakamiya and supports the team in battle as a scout.

He's also a physical type who prefers not to waste words. He hardly ever talks, but when it comes to his duty, there's no one you can trust more.

CHARACTER VOICE

Tomoyuki Shimura



He covers his eyes with his hat and rarely breaks his stoic looks.

His expressions

Maintenance Crew

Maki Tanabe

The unluckiest member of the maintenance crew. Her countless misfortunes vary in seriousness from always dropping her toast butter-side down to having her house catch fire. She somehow maintains a very positive attitude.

Pajamas

She wears a T-shirt and pants to bed, typical for a high school girl.

CHARACTER VOICE
Chiaki Maeda

In anime, pigtails and glasses indicate a clumsy girl. She stands out among the other girls because of her clumsiness.

Her cheerful personality compensates for her clumsiness.

Her expressions

Seika Mori

The backbone of the maintenance crew, she's a hard worker who devotes herself to the highly technical maintenance of the Shikon units under the command of Chief Hara. Some say that Unit 5121 couldn't function without her.

Sleepwear

She wears a T-shirt and black spandex shorts that match her outgoing personality.

CHARACTER VOICE
Tomoe Hanba

This bandana is her signature item. The rolled-up sleeves show her active nature.

She has a rich variety of facial expressions.

Her expressions

Motoko Hara

Those who maintain the Shikon units—the height of current technology—are also fighters in the world crisis.

This chief of the maintenance crew is both smart and sexy beyond her years. She has the impressive ability to manage the shorthanded maintenance crew and ensure the Shikon units make it to the battlefield. She has a bad habit of teasing the younger crewmembers.

Pajamas

Her loose-fitting lavender pajamas are pretty sexy.

CHARACTER VOICE
Megumi Shinohara

She's sexy for a high school girl, and she easily brushes aside Setoguchi's advances. She acts as a mentor to Mori.

Her face shows her intelligence and strong will.

Her expressions

Command Center

Tadataka Zengyo

He's the commander of Unit 5121, but he's often called "the Chairman." He leads the unit with calm and precise judgment and is the reason losses remain at a minimum in Unit 5121, despite the wealth of problems they face.

CHARACTER VOICE
Shouto Kashii

Never easily excited, he stands aloof from the rest of the class because he thinks emotional involvement is detrimental to the performance of his duty.

He manages the unit with calm judgment.

His expressions

Keigo Tosaka

This vice-commander of Unit 5121 contrasts with the somewhat nonchalant Zengyo. Born to a rich family, he could have escaped the draft, but instead he chose to join the army. He supports Zengyo's management of the unit.

Tosaka often gives orders to Hayami in person. His neat appearance seems to reflect his serious personality.

CHARACTER VOICE
Koichi Kuriyama

He often looks serious because of his position of responsibility.

His expressions

Matsuri Kato

She's the accountant for Unit 5121 and also takes care of various chores like ordering supplies and managing the daily life of the crew. She cheers everyone up with her positive attitude and entertaining manner of talking.

Pajamas

These colorful pajamas are printed with images of baby chicks.

CHARACTER VOICE
Junko Noda

Her catchy greeting energizes everyone in the unit. She can be counted on to take care of her daily duties.

She really fires up the crew with her cheerful expressions.

Her expressions

THE OFFICIAL ART of GUNPARADE MARCH

Unit 5121 Gear Uniforms

Assigned to Shokei High School, the members of Unit 5121 are students as well as soldiers who fight the Phantom Beasts. They wear their official Kyushu Unit uniforms to school. The unit also provides other outfits, including the combat suits the pilots wear in the HWTs and the coveralls the maintenance crew wears when working. Personnel are required to wear these uniforms except when on leave during the summer or when they're away from the school. In that aspect, these students are the same as any others in Japan.

ATTENTION!! STRATEGY FOR TOTAL VIEWING PLEASURE

From the Game to the Anime

What was changed from the original game?
"There was no way we could put all the characters in, so the number of characters was reduced. We didn't go too far into the mysteries of the world, either. Instead, we tried to build up the back story as much as possible."

What was your opinion when you played the game?

"It was entertaining. But there were a lot of elements, and it was a bit hard to really understand the whole thing. To be honest, I wish I could have just played the game as a regular player."

Director Katsushi Sakurabi

School Uniform

This uniform is to be worn on school grounds and in the dorms. Operators working in the command center wear the white suit.

Work Clothes

These coveralls, worn primarily by the maintenance crew, are well-made to withstand tough jobs and oil stains.

Combat Suit (Female)

Female *Shikon* pilots wear these suits in battle. They have less armor than the male version.

Combat Suit (Male)

The back, hips, legs and arms are protected by more defensive armor than the female version of the suit.

Teachers

Teachers are indispensable in helping the members of Unit 5121 deal with their daily lives.

The Officers

The future of the world rests on their shoulders.

CHARACTER VOICE
Miki Inoue

Haruka Yoshino

Ms. Yoshino is the homeroom teacher for the class Unit 5121 is assigned to (commonly known as the "prefab class"). She teaches literature, writing and other subjects unrelated to warfare. She's a nice teacher who takes good care of her students.

◆ Here Ms. Yoshino wears a pale pink suit that is reminiscent of spring. As the prefab class's homeroom teacher, she cares deeply for her students.

Her expressions

◆ She watches over her students with kindness... but they may not really be able to rely on her.

Hisaomi Sakaue

His job is to monitor the students' activities. He looks rather ominous but has a soft side, too. He teaches strategy and other warfare-related subjects. Unit 5121's military operations rely on both him and Commander Zengyo.

CHARACTER VOICE
Keiichi Sonobe

◆ He sports sunglasses and the bulging tummy of a middle-aged man—every school has someone like him policing student activities.

◆ His face is hidden, so you can't see his expressions.

His expressions

CHARACTER VOICE
Mariko Suzuki

Sarasa Wichita

This commander has absolute control over the Kyushu Unit formed to fight the Phantom Beasts. Hayami's Unit 5121 is also under her command. The storyline rarely touches on her directly, but she's the one who makes decisions on the battlefield.

Her expressions

◆ She has the tough responsibility of keeping track of the tactical situation at all times and deploying the unit accordingly.

◆ The always strict Commander Wichita reacts quickly to changes in the situation.

Enemies

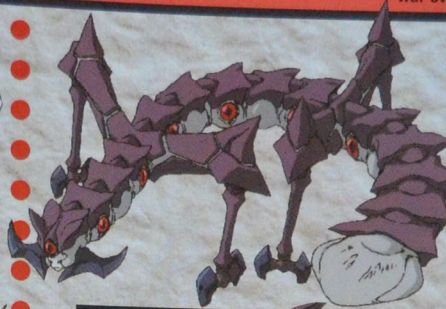
The mysterious Phantom Beasts have besieged Earth. Will this war ever end?



● The bottom part of the legs is thick with muscle, and it seems to be protected by hard hooves.



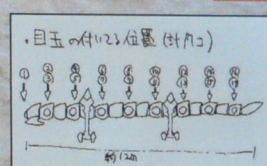
● These bio-missiles are fired by a gas pressure mechanism, and fall upon the Shikon units.



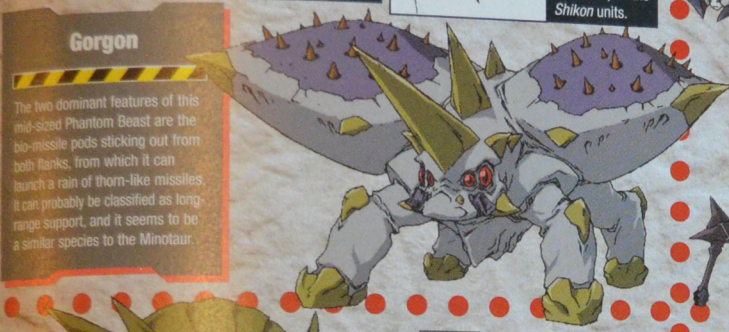
Naga

The special characteristic of this mid-sized Phantom Beast is its long jointed body. Its main responsibility in a group of Phantom Beasts is support, and it functions as a mobile gun battery, with internal organs all along the body that fire mid-range bio-lasers. It moves quickly, so Hayami and his allies have to be careful.

● The face-like pattern stuck to its front makes it seem even more hideous.



● The Naga reminds people of a lamprey. Its long body flexes at multiple joints.

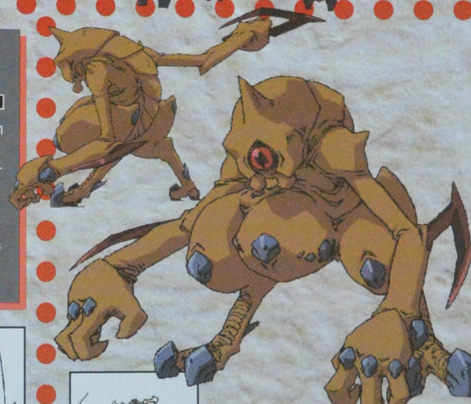


Gorgon

The two dominant features of this mid-sized Phantom Beast are the bio-missile pods sticking out from both flanks, from which it can launch a rain of horn-like missiles. It can probably be classified as long-range support, and it seems to be a similar species to the Minotaur.

Goblin Leader

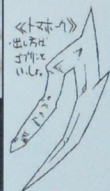
With a somewhat bigger body than that of a standard goblin, it seems to be some sort of leader. It's similar to a standard goblin in many ways (for instance, it attacks with a tomahawk), but the horns on its head and its huge hands are signs that it's much nastier.



Goblin

The most common small-sized Phantom Beast. With a body only slightly over three feet tall, it's pretty small but agile. They often run in huge groups, and when they attack together, they cause more damage than you would think.

● Huge crimson eyes stare at its foes. The two horns on its head are definitely ominous.



● The blade of this tomahawk is very wide, so it can probably inflict a lot of damage.



● An emotionless crimson eye is hidden behind the vertical slit of its eyelids.

● Its main weapons are the tomahawks that grow on each arm. It yanks them out.



Brain

This Phantom Beast seems to work as some sort of brain. Poisonous gases keep enemies at bay, and if enemies get close, the Brain's multitude of tentacles will finish them off. The primary objective of every engagement is to shoot PBE bombs into the Brains.



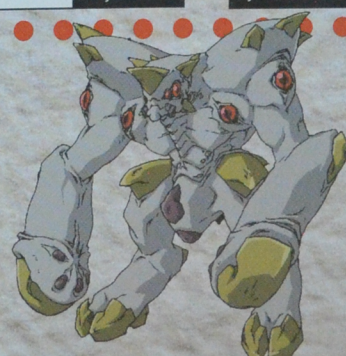
● When it detects an enemy, tentacles spring forth from its knees.

Kitakaze Zombie

A Phantom Beast possesses one of the Kitakaze helicopters and attacks with it. When humans mistake it for allied craft and relax, it unleashes the Vulcan cannon on them. A Kitakaze Zombie shows up in the early part of the first episode.



● Its weapons and flight ability are identical to the Kitakazes. Humans think this extremely dangerous opponent is a Kitakaze, and then it catches them off guard and wastes them.



Minotaur

This mid-sized Phantom Beast has approximately the same body shape as an HWT. Although it doesn't move very fast, it's skilled at hand-to-hand combat, and has pretty good attack and defense capabilities. There's a reason it's named after the fearsome creature from the Greek myth.



● Its dexterous fingers can easily grab things.

● Having two eyes on each side adds to its brutal look.



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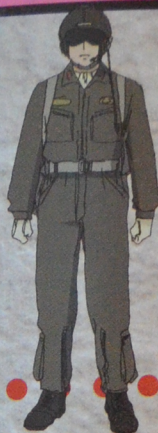
THE OFFICIAL ART of GUNPARADE MARCH

Allies

On the battlefields, at school and elsewhere, these characters show up to flesh out the storyline.

Pilots

They're responsible for piloting the Kitakaze helicopters or CV planes during battles against the Phantom Beasts. They don't have major roles in the show, but they do have the vital responsibility of supporting the Shikon units.



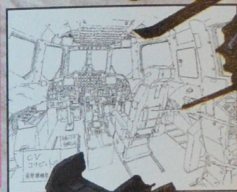
Regular Soldier

Troops of footsoldiers also play an important role on the battlefield by blocking the attacking Phantom Beasts in order to aid the deployment of the tank corps. Their job is to cut through the enemy with artillery strikes and provide backup for Shikon units.



CV

CV stands for "Carrier Vehicle." The CVs are new to the anime. After carrying the HWTs to the front lines, these huge transports function as mobile command bases. They also have VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) capabilities.



Kitakaze

These military helicopters are assigned to the Kyushu Unit. On the battlefield they are often used as backup or to protect the CVs. They are equipped with rocket launchers and other weaponry.

Cafeteria Manager

The members of Unit 5121 sleep in the school dorms. This is the manager of the student cafeteria in the dorms. He seems thick-headed but is a top-notch cook.

Students at Shokei High

Naturally, the members of Unit 5121 aren't the only people attending Shokei High. Normal students study there, too. The school uniform is a dark red jacket. This is the winter version of the uniform.

ATTENTION!!

Those Who Wait for the End of the War

When you're portraying the world of *Gunparade March*, with war and everyday life existing side-by-side, what areas do you have to be the most careful with?

"The flow of time. Whether it's the calm of everyday life or the intensity of the battlefield, it's only the flow of time that feels real and never wavers, regardless of the circumstances."

What kind of future awaits Hayami and the other members of Unit 5121?

"Probably a bright future..."

Director Katsushi Sakurabi

Candy Shop Owner

The candy shop near the school is a source of vital nourishment for Hayami and his friends, so naturally the old lady who works there knows their faces. They decide who goes to get candy by a game of rock-paper-scissors, but Hayami's not good at all and usually ends up going.

Voice Actress Spotlight

Hitomi Nabatame, the voice of Yuna Miyama from *Maburaho*, tries cooking in an apron, just like Yuna!

HITOMI NABATAME

shot by YUTAKA TAKAYAMA
styling by KANAKO ONITSUKA
hair & make-up by SAYAKA MIZUTANI (fringe)
text by SHIZUKA OIKAWA (es)





Yuna and I aren't at all alike...

Being a troublemaker is part of Yuna's appeal

Even though this is Hitomi Nabatame's first year as a voice actress, she's on a roll playing Yuna Miyama, the main character in the popular *Maburaho*. When chosen for the main role, she was "half happy, but half anxious." She quite often had trouble sleeping. Perhaps her stage-performing experience gives her the chutzpah to take it in stride. At the photo shoot for this article, Hitomi smiles and says, "This is my first time doing a photo shoot with a stylist. But it was my first time for everything, so I'm enjoying it!"

Hitomi's character Yuna loves Kazuki Shikimori, a boy at the magic school who has no special abilities. Yuna's beauty and intelligence are every boy's dream, and on top of that, she's a great cook!

"I'd like to learn from her," says Hitomi. "I don't think I have much ability as a cook. I've even messed up curry [which is very easy to make]. You know, I put in enough curry roux for ten servings [which is plenty for one pot], but it didn't get thick like it was supposed to. No matter how much roux I put in, it was still watery. I did follow the recipe...but oh well, I served it to my friends anyway. They sure didn't make any comments about the curry, though [laughs]!"

Hitomi describes Yuna as "a perfect girl who's way different from me," but Yuna does have one imperfection—she's a bit of a troublemaker.

"She's a jealous person, so she sometimes destroys the school with her magic. But I guess that could also make her seem charming."

Kuriko and Rin really bother the straightforward Yuna because Kuriko is



so well-endowed and Rin looks great in traditional Japanese clothing. At the moment, Yuna's closer to Kazuki than either of them, but no one knows what will happen in the future.

"I think the other two are growing attracted to Kazuki and are turning into strong rivals for Yuna. So I guess Yuna's jealousy will only intensify. It's fun to act the scenes where Yuna gets all jealous and blows up. But when I voice her, I want to keep in mind that she's always supposed to be charming. I hope Kazuki's relationship with the three girls becomes stronger and that they end up forming a good group together."

Hitomi mentions that she still makes a lot of mistakes during recording. "But when I'm nervous and tense at the recording, the other cast members help to create a more relaxing atmosphere for me." Her enthusiasm is apparent when she comments that she wants to improve her skills until she's reached the height of her potential. "I'm still green, but I'm ready to work hard to show the various sides of my characters! Wish me luck!"



PROFILE: Born August 4, she comes from Kanagawa, Japan. She originally worked in the Gekidan Tokyo Kandenchi and now belongs to Kanproduction. Her current voice roles include Yuna from *Maburaho* and Arcueid from *LUNAR LEGEND TSUKIHIME*. If she could use magic three times like Yuna, she would want to "fly in the sky, eliminate war from the face of the earth and be able to speak several foreign languages."

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Anime Land is jam-packed with information to quench your thirst for all that is anime! It contains an Episode Guide of shows currently airing in Japan, US TV listings, as well as new release and top selling item data for both the US and Japan. After you've read all the TV info, get off your couch and out into the world using our convention listing.

ANIME LAND

TV Ratings Index - Japan

TITLE	VIEWER RATINGS				NETWORK
	09/08-09/14	09/15-09/21	09/22-09/28	09/29-10/05	
AIR MASTER	2.9%	4.3%	3.8%	3.2%	Nihon TV
Ashita no Nadja	5.7%	5.8%	6.7%	6.5%	ABC / TV Asahi
ASSOBOT Senki Goku	3.2%	2.9%	2.9%	3.6%	TV Tokyo
Astro Boy—Tetsuwan Atom	6.5%	7.2%	6.2%	6.6%	Fuji TV
Avenger	—	—	—	1.4%	TV Tokyo
Bakuten Shoot Beyblade G Revolution	2.0%	2.6%	2.8%	3.0%	TV Tokyo
Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon (Live-Action)	—	—	—	4.6%	Chubu Nihon / TBS
Boken Yuki Pluster World	2.1%	2.5%	3.0%	2.9%	TV Tokyo
Cho Robot Seimeitai Transformer Micron Densetsu	2.4%	2.7%	2.6%	3.1%	TV Tokyo
Choseishin Gransazers	—	—	—	4.8%	TV Tokyo
Crush Gear Nitro	3.1%	3.8%	4.2%	2.8%	Nagoya TV / TV Asahi
D.C.—Da Capo	—	—	—	—	TV Kanagawa
DEAR BOYS	1.5%	1.8%	2.4%	2.4%	TV Tokyo
Di Gi Charat Nyo	2.1%	1.8%	1.9%	2.2%	TV Osaka / TV Tokyo
D-N-ANGEL	2.9%	2.6%	3.6%	—	TV Tokyo
E'S OTHERWISE	1.4%	2.1%	2.4%	—	TV Tokyo
FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST	—	—	—	5.9%	Mainichi / TBS
Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu	2.2%	1.2%	—	—	Fuji TV
GADGUARD	1.5%	1.7%	1.7%	—	Fuji TV
Getbackers—Dakkanya	3.2%	3.6%	—	—	TBS
Inu Yasha	9.1%	9.9%	—	—	Nihon TV
Kaleido Star	0.4%	1.1%	0.9%	2.5%	TV Tokyo
Kamen Rider 555 ("Masked Rider Faiz")	10.0%	8.5%	9.3%	10.0%	TV Asahi
Konjiki no Gash Bell!!	7.3%	7.8%	7.3%	7.7%	Fuji TV
LAST EXILE	1.3%	1.3%	1.8%	2.3%	TV Tokyo
Matantei Loki RAGNAROK	3.8%	3.8%	2.5%	—	TV Tokyo
Meitantei Conan ("Detective Conan")	12.9%	12.5%	12.9%	—	Yomiuri TV / Nihon TV
Mermaid Melody Pichi Pichi Pitchi	4.1%	4.4%	3.3%	4.4%	TV Aichi / TV Tokyo
Mobile Suit Gundam SEED	6.0%	8.0%	5.9%	—	Mainichi / TBS
NARUTO	7.6%	8.2%	7.4%	6.4%	TV Tokyo
ONE PIECE	—	13.2%	—	—	Fuji TV
Pocket Monster Advanced Generation ("Pokémon")	6.7%	9.5%	8.2%	8.6%	TV Tokyo
Saiyuki RELOAD	—	—	—	4.2%	TV Tokyo
Sakigake!! Cromatie Koukou	—	—	—	2.8%	TV Tokyo
Shin Megami Tensei Devil Children—Light & Dark	4.7%	5.1%	3.9%	—	TV Tokyo
Shutsugeki! MACHINEROBORESCUE	2.6%	2.7%	3.1%	2.5%	TV Tokyo
SONIC X	3.3%	3.8%	3.0%	3.3%	TV Tokyo
Sora no Stellvia ("Cosmic Stellvia")	1.5%	1.5%	1.7%	—	TV Tokyo
Takahashi Rumiko Gekijo	2.0%	1.6%	1.7%	—	TV Tokyo
Takahashi Rumiko Gekijo Ningyo no Mori	—	—	—	2.7%	TV Tokyo
TANK KNIGHTS PORTRISS	1.6%	2.0%	0.8%	1.3%	TV Tokyo
Tantei Gakuen Q	4.6%	—	—	4.4%	TBS
TEXHNOLYZE	1.5%	1.7%	1.7%	—	Fuji TV
Wagamama Fairy Mirumo de Pon!	5.8%	6.5%	4.7%	—	TV Tokyo
Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Monsters	4.9%	4.4%	4.0%	3.5%	TV Tokyo

(The above percentages represent audience ratings based on polling by Video Research Kanto.)



The following Episode Guide may (okay, it does) contain spoilers. It includes summaries of episodes of anime series airing on Japanese television from November 10 to December 9. These series are generally ahead of the US releases of the same titles, so proceed with caution and watch as the plots thicken.



Monthly Sales

DVD

RANK	TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR
1	Lilo and Stitch	Buena Vista Home Entertainment
2	Kido Senshi Gundam SEED 7	Bandai Visual
3	DRAGON BALL Z DVD BOX DRAGON BOX Z-Hen Vol.2	Fuji TV
4	Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki Season Three Vol.1	VAP
5	LUNAR LEGEND TSUKIHIME prologue	GENEON ENTERTAINMENT
6	Gekijoban RahXephon Tagen Hensokyoku	Media Factory
7	Kokaku Kidotai STAND ALONE COMPLEX 10	Bandai Visual
8	Tom and Jerry: Let's Sports!	Warner Home Video
9	Kido Senshi Gundam SEED 6	Bandai Visual
10	Ai Yori Aoshi -Enishi- Saiai	GENEON ENTERTAINMENT

CD SINGLES

RANK	TITLE	ARTIST	DISTRIBUTOR
1	Melissa (FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST)	PornoGraffiti	SME Records
2	Kimi to iu Hikari (Meitantei Conan)	GARNET CROW	GIZA studio
3	I love dream world (ASSOBOT Senki Goku)	dream	avex trax
4	Makenaide, Makenaide...	Megumi Hayashibara	King Records
5	CARNIVAL - BABEL - REVIVAL	Megumi Hayashibara & Go Takahashi	King Records
6	FIND THE WAY (Mobile Suit Gundam SEED)	Mika Nakashima	Sony Music Associated Records
7	Lolita☆Strawberry in summer (ASSOBOT Senki Goku)	SweetS	avex trax
8	Realize (Mobile Suit Gundam SEED)	Nami Tamaki	Sony Music Records
9	Sore ga, Ai desho / Kimi ni Fuku Kaze (Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu)	Mikuni Shimokawa	Pony Canyon
10	The end of the world (Sora no Stellvia)	angela	King Records

CD ALBUMS

RANK	TITLE	ARTIST	DISTRIBUTOR
1	Kido Senshi Gundam SEED COMPLETE BEST	—	Sony Music Associated Records
2	ONE PIECE BEST ALBUM—ONE PIECE Shudaikashu	—	avex trax
3	Kido Senshi Gundam SEED ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK III	—	Victor Entertainment
4	Chara de Rie	Rie Tanaka	Victor Entertainment
5	LAST EXILE O.S.T.2	—	Victor Entertainment
6	JAM Project—Best Collection VOL.2 FREEDOM	JAM Project	Lantis
7	Single Collection + NIKOPACHI	Maaya Sakamoto	Victor Entertainment
8	Kido Senshi Gundam SEED SUIT CD Vol.4 Miguel Ayman x Nicol Amarfi	YUUKA & others	Victor Entertainment
9	THE PRINCE OF TENNIS ed.REQUEST (Tennis no Ouji-sama)	—	NEC Interchannel
10	THE PRINCE OF TENNIS op.REQUEST (Tennis no Ouji-sama)	—	NEC Interchannel

DVD and CD data by Oricon; www.oricon.co.jp

MANGA

RANK	TITLE	ARTIST	PUBLISHER
1	Hikaru no Go 23	Yumi Hotta & Takeshi Obata	Shueisha
2	Tennis no Ouji-sama 20	Takeshi Konomi	Shueisha
3	Heaven? 6	Noriko Sasaki	Shogakukan
4	Kimi wa Pet 8	Yayoi Ogawa	Kodansha
5	Paradise Kiss 5	Ai Yazawa	Shodensha
6	20-seiki Shonen 14	Naoki Urasawa	Shogakukan
7	Angel Heart 8	Tsukasa Hojo	Shinchosha
8	Yotsuba to! 1	Kiyohiko Azuma	MediaWorks
9	Inu-Yasha 32	Rumiko Takahashi	Shogakukan
10	Haru o Daite ita 8	Yuuka Nitta	Biblos

Source: Nippan survey, September 30, 2003

Reader Poll Rankings

Newtype Japan readers share their favorite characters and anime...

TOP 10 MOST POPULAR MALE CHARACTERS

RANK	CHARACTER NAME	TITLE
1	Kira Yamato	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
2	Athrun Zala	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
3	Yzak Jule	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
4	Edward Elric	FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST
5	Sosuke Sagara	Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu
6	Mwu La Filaga	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
7	Andy Waldfeld	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
8	Dearka Elthman	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
9	Nicol Amarfi	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
10	Shani Andras	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED

TOP 10 MOST POPULAR FEMALE CHARACTERS

RANK	CHARACTER NAME	TITLE
1	Lacus Clyne	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
2	Cagalli Yula Athha	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
3	Filay Allister	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
4	Nemu Asakura	D.C.—Da Capo
5	Murree Ramius	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
6	Rei Ayanami	Neon Genesis Evangelion
7	Miriallia Haww	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
8	Natarle Badgiruel	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
9	Kaname Chidori	Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu
10	Riku Harada	D-N-ANGEL

TOP 20 MOST POPULAR ANIME

RANK	TITLE
1	Mobile Suit Gundam SEED
2	FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST
3	D.C.—Da Capo
4	Neon Genesis Evangelion
5	Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu
6	Saiyuki RELOAD
7	NARUTO
8	D-N-ANGEL
9	Avenger
10	Onegai☆Twins
11	ONE PIECE
12	Kimi ga Nozomu Eien
13	Inu Yasha
14	Ai Yori Aoshi -Enishi-
15	Kaleido Star
16	Cowboy Bebop
17	GUNSLINGER GIRL
18	Ikki Tousen
19	Sora no Stellvia ("Cosmic Stellvia")
20	Tennis no Ouji-sama

翻訳者募集

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Attn: Translation

-or-

fax: 713-341-7399

-or-

submit résumé as a standard
MS Word document to
wkposting@hotmail.com

ANIME LAND

New Releases

DVD

RELEASE DATE	TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR
11/19	Kino no Tabi -the Beautiful World- VI	Pony Canyon
11/19	Konjiki no Gash Bell!! Vol.1	Shogakukan
11/21	AIR MASTER Vol.5	VAP
11/21	SPACE PIRATE CAPTAIN HERLOCK -The Endless Odyssey- 12th Voyage	VAP
11/21	Kaleido Star Stage.3	TV Tokyo Medianet
11/21	TEXHNOLYZE unite05	GENEON ENTERTAINMENT
11/22	Ikki Tousen Vol.1	Media Factory
11/22	Narue no Sekai Vol.6	Toshiba Entertainment
11/27	THE FEATURE FILM NEON GENESIS EVANGELION	King Records
11/28	D.C.—Da Capo Vol.2	King Records
11/28	Kido Senshi Gundam SEED 9	Bandai Visual
11/28	Galaxy Angel AA Vols.4-6 Limited Special Pack	Bandai Visual
11/28	The Big O second season 7	Bandai Visual
11/28	Shutsugeki! MACHINEROBORESCUE 07	Bandai Visual
11/28	Di Gi Charat Nyo Vol.5	Bandai Visual
11/28	Macross Zero 3	Bandai Visual
11/28	Witch Hunter Robin XIII	Bandai Visual
11/28	Kokaku Kidotai STAND ALONE COMPLEX 12	Bandai Visual
11/28	Crayon Shin-chan Special 4	Bandai Visual
11/28	Kochira Katsushikaku Kameari Koenmae Hashutsujo Vols.1-2	Bandai Visual
11/28	Gekijoban Pocket Monster Odoru Pokémon Himitsu Kichi	Shogakukan
11/28	Bakuten Shoot Beyblade G Revolution Vols.06-07	CS Loginet
12/03	Sora no Stellvia FOUNDATION VI	King Records
12/03	Ultra Maniac DVD-BOX MAGIC.II	King Records
12/03	Gakuen Senki Muryou DVD-BOX	King Records
12/03	NARUTO Vol. 12	Aniplex
12/03	Massugu ni Iko.	Yomiuri TV
12/03	ONE PIECE Fourth Season Alabaster Gekitohen piece.5	avex trax
12/05	Cyborg 009	TOEI Video
12/05	Astro Boy—Tetsuwan Atom DVD-BOX 1	Sony Pictures Entertainment

CD SINGLES

RELEASE DATE	TITLE / ARTIST	DISTRIBUTOR
11/21	Dive in the Sky / Mikio Sakai	Victor Entertainment
11/27	Trust Me / BI KYO RAN & Sunplaza Nakano	Lantis
11/27	winter Story / Saeko Chiba	Lantis
11/27	Kimi ga Nozomu Eien Character Song portrait 1 Mitsuki/Tomoko Ishibashi	Lantis
12/03	Life goes on / U-ya Asaoka	Tokuma Japan Communications
12/03	merry-go-round / angela	King Records

CD ALBUMS

RELEASE DATE	TITLE / ARTIST	DISTRIBUTOR
11/19	Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu Soundtrack Album	Pony Canyon
11/19	Bakuryu Sentai Abaranger Soundzaurs 4 & 5 -fossil tracks-	Columbia Music Entertainment
11/19	Nangoku Shonen Papua-kun Zenkyokushu	Columbia Music Entertainment
11/19	Shinkon Gattai Godannar!! Original Soundtrack	Columbia Music Entertainment
11/19	Kokyoshi Ginga Tetsudo Monogatari	Columbia Music Entertainment
11/21	Nurse Witch Komugi-chan Maji-karte Uta Hits! 2	GENEON ENTERTAINMENT
11/21	HUNTER x HUNTER R SP 3	Frontier Works
11/21	Drama CD Saiyuki Volume 12	Frontier Works
11/27	AI Yori Aoshi -Enishi- Onban 1 "Matsu"	GENEON ENTERTAINMENT
11/27	CHAKURIKU!! / Masaaki Endoh	Lantis
11/27	amoroso	Lantis
11/27	POPOMUSIC	Lantis
11/27	Magical Doremi # CD-BOX	Lantis
12/03	Howl no Ugoku Shiro Image Album	King Records
12/03	Bishojo Game Song ni Ai o!! / UNDER 17	Tokuma Japan Communications
12/03	PASTEL☆PARTY / Pastel	Lantis
12/03	Sora no Koe / angela	King Records
12/03	Godzilla x Mothra x Mecha Godzilla Tokyo SOS Original Soundtrack	King Records

Upcoming Events

CONVENTIONS

START	END	CONVENTION	LOCATION
01/23/04	01/25/04	Ohayocon www.ohayocon.com	Hyatt Regency Columbus Columbus, OH
01/30/04	02/01/04	Anime LA www.anime-la.org/	Airtel Plaza Hotel Van Nuys, CA
01/30/04	02/04/04	Ushicon www.ushicon.com	Austin Marriott at the Capitol Austin, TX
02/13/04	02/15/04	Katsucon www.katsucon.com	Hyatt Regency Crystal City Arlington, VA
02/28/04	02/28/04	Kame Con www.kamecon.com	Manchester Memorial High School Manchester, NH
03/05/04	03/06/04	Anime Overdose 2004 www.animeod.com	Santa Clara University Santa Clara, CA
03/12/04	03/14/04	No Brand Con www.nobrandcon.com	UW Eau Claire - Davies Center Eau Claire, WI
03/12/04	03/14/04	Tekkoshon www.tekkoshon.com/	Pittsburgh Marriott North Cranberry Township, PA
03/19/04	03/21/04	Anime Oasis www.animeoasis.org	Boise Airport Holiday Inn Boise, ID
03/20/04	03/20/04	Recca Con www.reccacon.com	Los Medanos College Pittsburgh, CA
03/26/04	03/28/04	Anime Detour www.animedetour.com	Minneapolis Airport Marriott Bloomington, MN
04/02/04	04/04/04	FITcon 2004 www.fitcon.info	Florida Institute of Technology Melbourne, FL
04/02/04	04/04/04	Middle Tennessee Anime Convention www.mtac.net	Radisson Nashville Airport Nashville, TN
04/03/04	04/03/04	Mini-Con www.mini-con.com/	TBA Tulsa, OK
04/09/04	04/11/04	Anime Boston www.animeboston.com	Boston Park Plaza Hotel & Towers Boston, MA
04/23/04	04/25/04	Bakuretsu Con 66.246.108.92/~bakur646/	Best Western Con Center Burlington, VT
04/23/04	04/25/04	Sakura-Con www.sakuracon.org/	Seattle Airport Hilton & Conf Ctr Seattle, WA
04/30/04	05/02/04	PersaCon www.geocities.com/chibicon2k3/	TBA Huntsville, AL
05/14/04	05/16/04	Anime Central www.acen.org/	Hyatt Regency O'Hare Rosemont, IL
05/21/04	05/23/04	Jacon www.jacon.org/	University of Central Florida Orlando, FL
05/28/04	05/30/04	Animazement www.animazement.org/	Sheraton Imperial Hotel & Conv Ctr Durham, NC
05/28/04	05/30/04	Anime-Mid Atlantic 4 www.animemidatlantic.com/	Holiday Inn Select Kroger Center Richmond, VA
05/28/04	05/30/04	Anime North www.animenorth.com	Toronto Congress Center Toronto, Ontario
05/28/04	05/31/04	FanimeCon www.fanime.com	San Jose Convention Center San Jose, CA
05/29/04	05/31/04	Pacific Media Expo www.pacificmediaexpo.com	Anaheim Convention Center Anaheim, CA
06/04/04	06/06/04	Project A-kon www.a-kon.com	Adam's Mark Hotel Dallas, TX
06/18/04	06/20/04	Anime Next www.animenext.org	Crowne Plaza Meadowlands Secaucus, NJ
06/18/04	06/20/04	PortConMaine www.portconmaine.com	Best Western Merry Manor Inn South Portland, ME
06/26/04	06/27/04	Jafax www.jafax.org	Allendale Campus-Grand Valley State Univ. Allendale, MI
07/02/04	07/05/04	Anime Expo www.anime-expo.org/	Anaheim Convention Center Anaheim, CA
07/16/04	07/18/04	ConnectiCon www.connecticon.org/	University of Hartford W. Hartford, CT
07/16/04	07/18/04	Ikasucon www.ikasucon.org/	Clarion Hotel and Suites Cincinnati Cincinnati, OH
07/18/04	07/20/04	MetroCon www.metroconventions.com	Crowne Plaza Tampa at Sabal Park Tampa, FL
07/30/04	08/01/04	Otakon www.otakon.com	TBA Baltimore, MD
09/03/04	09/05/04	Big Apple Anime Fest www.bigappleanimefest.com/	TBA Midtown Manhattan, NY
10/22/04	10/24/04	Oni-Con www.oni-con.com	North Houston Sheraton Houston, TX

GAME

TITLE	PLATFORM	PUBLISHER
AirForce Delta Strike	PS2	Konami
Alias	PC	Acclaim
All-Star Baseball 2005	PS2	Acclaim
Black 9	PS2	Majesco Sales Inc.
Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	GC, PS2, XBX	Electronic Arts
Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	PS2	Sony Online Entertainment
Dinosaur Hunting	XBX	Metro 3D Inc.
Drift Racer Kaido Battle	PS2	Sammy Studio
The Fast and the Furious	PS2, XBX	Vivendi Universal
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	GC	Nintendo
Headhunter: Redemption	PS2, XBX	Sega of America Inc.
Ice Nine	PS2	Bam Entertainment
Lupin the 3rd: Treasure of the Sorcerer King	PS2	Bandai
Mega Man Battle Chip Challenge	GBA	Capcom
Metroid: Zero Mission	GBA	Nintendo
MX Unleashed	PS2, XBX	THQ, Inc.
Nightshade	PS2	Sega of America Inc.
Ninja Gaiden	XBX	Tecmo
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	PS2, XBX	Activision
Rent a Hero No. 1	XBX	AIA USA Ltd.
Rise to Honor	PS2	Sony Computer Entertainment
R-Type Final	PS2	Eidos
Seven Samurai 20XX	PS2	Sammy Studio
Silent Scope Complete	XBX	Konami
SNK vs Capcom SVC Chaos	PS2	SNK Corp.
Star Ocean Till the End of Time	PS2	Enix
StarCraft: Ghost	PS2, XBX	Vivendi Universal
Thief III	XBX	Eidos
Unreal II: The Awakening	XBX	Atari
World Soccer Winning Eleven 7 International	PS2	Konami
Wrath Unleashed	PS2, XBX	LucasArts
X-Files: Resist or Serve	XBX	Vivendi Universal

GB - Game Boy GBA - Game Boy Advance GC - GameCube PS - PlayStation PS2 - PlayStation 2 XBX - Xbox

Monthly Sales

DVD

RANK	TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR
1	Spirited Away	Disney
2	Dragon Ball GT: Annihilation	FUNimation Productions
3	Dragon Ball GT: Salvation	FUNimation Productions
4	Chobits: Disappearance Vol. 5	Geneon Entertainment
5	Full Metal Panic: Mission 5	ADV Films
6	Cowboy Bebop: The Movie	Columbia TriStar
7	Yu Yu Hakusho: Deadly Toguro Edited	FUNimation Productions
8	Please Teacher! - Hello Again Vol. 4	Bandai Entertainment
9	Akira - 1989	Geneon Entertainment
10	Princess Mononoke	Disney

Source: Nielsen VideoScan, November 2003

MANGA

RANK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1	Trigun Vol. 1 TPB	Dark Horse Comics
2	Berserk Vol. 1 Black Swordsman TPB	Dark Horse Comics
3	Chobits Vol. 8 GN	TOKYOPOP
4	Ranma 1/2 Vol. 24 TPB	VIZ
5	Inu-Yasha Vol. 15 TPB	VIZ
6	Battle Angel Alita Last Order Vol. 2 TPB	VIZ
7	Full Metal Panic Vol. 1 TPB	ADV Manga
8	All New Tenchi Muyo Vol. 3 Dark Washu TPB	VIZ
9	Fushigi Yugi Vol. 9 Lover TPB	VIZ
10	Ragnarok Vol. 8 GN	TOKYOPOP

Source: Diamond Comics, November 2003
Please be advised that manga listed in this section are graphic novels and trade paperbacks.

New Releases - FEBRUARY 2004

MANGA & MANHWA

TITLE	PUBLISHER
A.I. Love You Vol. 1	TOKYOPOP
Alice 19th Vol. 3: Chained GN	VIZ
Alien Nine: Emulators Vol. 1 GN	CPM Manga
Azumanga Daioh Vol. 3 TPB	ADV Manga
Basara Vol. 2 GN	VIZ
Battle Angel Alita: Last Order Vol. 3 TPB	VIZ
Blade of the Immortal #87: Mirror of the Soul Part 3	Dark Horse Comics
Boys Over Flowers Vol. 2: Hana Yori Dango TPB	VIZ
Ceres, Celestial Legend GN	VIZ
Crayon Shinchan #6	ComicsOne
Demon Palace Babylon Vol. 2 TPB	ADV Manga
Di Gi Charat Vol. 3 GN	VIZ
Digimon Zero Two Vol. 2	TOKYOPOP
Doing Time/En La Prison GN	Fanfare/Ponent Mon
Dragon Ball Vol. 13 GN	VIZ
Dragon Knights Vol. 12	TOKYOPOP
Excel Saga Vol. 5 TPB	VIZ
Figure 17 Vol. 1 TPB	ADV Manga
Firefighter!: Daigo of Fire Company M Vol. 6	VIZ
Fist of the North Star Master Edition Vol. 8 GN	Gutsoon! Entertainment
Flame of Rebecca Vol. 2 TPB	VIZ
Flowers and Bees Vol. 1 GN	VIZ
Fruits Basket Vol. 1	TOKYOPOP
Full Metal Panic! Vol. 3 TPB	ADV Manga
Fushigi Yugi: Enemy Vol. 10 GN	VIZ
Fushigi Yugi: Oracle Vol. 2 TPB	VIZ
Galaxy Angel #1 GN	Broccoli
GetBackers Vol. 1	TOKYOPOP
Gravitation Vol. 4	TOKYOPOP
Gundam: The Origin #7	VIZ
Gyo Vol. 2 TPB	VIZ
Happy Mania Vol. 6	TOKYOPOP
Hot Gimmick Vol. 3 TPB	VIZ
Initial D Vol. 10	TOKYOPOP
Inu-Yasha TPB	VIZ
Just a Girl Book 1 GN	CPM Manga
Kill Me, Kiss Me Vol. 1	TOKYOPOP
Kindaichi Case Files, The Treasure Isle	TOKYOPOP
Knights of the Zodiac Vol. 2 GN	VIZ
Les Bijoux Vol. 1	TOKYOPOP
Magic Knight Rayearth II Vol. 1	TOKYOPOP
Maison Ikkoku Vol. 1 TPB	VIZ
My Sassy Girl GN #1	ComicsOne
Oh My Goddess! #105: Sora Unchained Part 1	Dark Horse Comics
One Piece Vol. 3 TPB	VIZ
Planet Ladder Vol. 6	TOKYOPOP
Please Save My Earth Vol. 3 TPB	VIZ
Project Arms Vol. 2: Egrigori TPB	VIZ
Raijin Comics #42	VIZ
Ranma 1/2 TPB	Gutsoon! Entertainment
Rave Master Vol. 7	VIZ
Rebirth Vol. 6	TOKYOPOP
Rebound Vol. 6	TOKYOPOP
Red Prowling Devil #7	TOKYOPOP
Revenge of Mouflon Vol. 1 TPB	ComicsOne
Revolutionary Girl Utena: To Blossom Vol. 5 TPB	Gutsoon! Entertainment
Samurai Desper Kyo Vol. 5	VIZ
Samurai Legend GN	TOKYOPOP
Shadow Star: A Flower's Fragrance Vol. 5 TPB	CPM Manga
Spirited Away TPB	Dark Horse Comics
Steam Detectives Vol. 7 TPB	VIZ
Suki Vol. 1	VIZ
Super Manga Blast! #40	TOKYOPOP
Tenchi Muyo!: Sasami Stories GN	Dark Horse Comics
	VIZ

Source: Diamond Comics

DVD

TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR
Angelic Layer: Faith, Hope, Love (Vol.4)	ADV Films
Beyblade (Vol.7)	Geneon Entertainment
Black Jack: Infection (Vol.1)	Central Park Media
Captain Herlock (Vol.1)	Geneon Entertainment
Corrector Yui (Vol.4)	VIZ
Cosplay Complex	ADV Films
Dragon Ball GT: Evolution (Vol.11)	FUNimation Productions
Dragon Ball GT: Revolution (Vol.12)	FUNimation Productions
Full Metal Panic! Mission 07	ADV Films
Haibane Renmei (Vol.4)	Geneon Entertainment
Happy Lesson: Mom-Ageddon (Vol.1)	ADV Films
Heat Guy J (Vol.4)	Geneon Entertainment
Infinite Ryvius: Tension (Vol.3)	Bandai Entertainment
Initial D (Vol.3)	TOKYOPOP
Inu Yasha (Vol.14)	VIZ
Inu Yasha (Vol.15)	VIZ
Kiddy Grade (Vol.1 also w/ box)	FUNimation Productions
Kikaider: Silent Journey (Vol.4)	Bandai Entertainment
Kino's Journey: Idle Adventurer (Vol.1 also w/ box)	ADV Films
Last Exile (Vol.2)	Geneon Entertainment
Legend of Dragon Kings: White Dragon (Vol.5)	Central Park Media
Legend of the Mystical Ninja: The Fight for Justice (Vol.2)	ADV Films
Mao-Chan (Vol.3)	Geneon Entertainment
Master Keaton (Vol.5)	Geneon Entertainment
Ninja Scroll TV (Vol.2)	Urban Vision
Pokémon: Journey to the Johto League Champions (Vol.7)	VIZ
Pretear (Vol.3)	ADV Films
Saint Seiya: Personal Feuds (Vol.4)	ADV Films
Saiyuki: Soldiers of Destiny (Vol.8)	ADV Films
Slayers: Gorgeous	ADV Films
Spirit Warrior: Festival of the Ogres Revival (Vol.3)	Central Park Media
Steam Detectives: Case 4	ADV Films
Sugar (Vol.6)	Geneon Entertainment
Superior Defender Gundam Force: The Heroes Arrive (Vol.1)	Bandai Entertainment
Superior Defender Gundam Force: New Allies (Vol.2)	Bandai Entertainment
Witch Hunter Robin: Inquisition (Vol.3)	Bandai Entertainment
Yukikaze: Danger Zone (Vol.1)	Bandai Entertainment
Yukikaze: Danger Zone Limited Edition (Vol.1)	Bandai Entertainment
Yu Yu Hakusho: The Seven (Vol.21)	FUNimation Productions

MANGA & MANHWA (cont'd)

TITLE	PUBLISHER
The All-New Tenchi Muyo!: Dark Washu Vol. 3 GN	VIZ
The Big O Vol. 4 TPB	VIZ
Those Who Hunt Elves Vol. 2 TPB	ADV Manga
Tuxedo Gin Vol. 2 TPB	VIZ
Usagi Yojimbo #73	Dark Horse Comics
Vagabond TPB	VIZ
Wedding Peach Vol. 2 TPB	VIZ
X 1999 GN	VIZ
Yu-Gi-Oh! Vol. 4 TPB	VIZ
YuYu Hakusho: Good-bye, Material World Vol. 1 TPB	VIZ
YuYu Hakusho: Lonesome Ghosts Vol. 2 TPB	VIZ

All release dates are subject to change without notification.

Binzume Yosei

TV Shin-Hiroshima
www.entertain.co.jp/magical-cute/tv/
Creator: Yulko Tokumi
Director: Yoshiaki Iwasaki

EPISODE 7

It's October, and fall has set in. Cold winds start to blow, and the leaves begin to fall from the trees. Kururu and her friends visit their friend Tama-chan, a grade school student. The four of them read poems about autumn, and ask Tama-chan whose poem is the best. Tama-chan hesitates to pick one herself, and decides to use a different method to choose a winner.

EPISODE 8

November comes, and in the garden of Sensei-san's house, purple flowers are in full bloom. Kururu and her friends find a flower bud, and try to make it bloom. With Tama-chan's advice, they start taking care of it.

EPISODE 9

It's the last day of December. Tama-chan realizes that Kururu and her friends aren't prepared for New Year's Day at all, so she tries to get them ready. They're almost panicked to hear that they can't celebrate New Year's Day unless they finish cleaning the house, cooking New Year's cuisine and watching the annual singing contest. So they all work together to get everything done.

EPISODE 10

The four fairies manage to celebrate New Year's Day after all, and now they're curious about New Year's greeting cards. However, they don't understand the meaning of a phrase written on one of the cards, so they try to figure it out.

Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon

sailormoon.channel.or.jp/
www.hicbc.com/tv/sailormoon/
Chubu Nippon Broadcast / TBS
Creator: Naoko Takeuchi
Director: Ryuta Tasaki

STORY

Rei Hino (Sailor Mars) became friends with Usagi after they defeated a demon together. Now they have to find the last soldier.

One day, Usagi's hassled by a group of men, and a girl saves her. The next day, Usagi finds the girl at school, and approaches her in order to say thank you. Her name is Makoto Kino, and everyone avoids her because it is rumored that she was expelled from her previous school for fighting. However, Usagi doesn't care about the rumor and shows Makoto around the city. They become friends. Later, Makoto is attacked by a demon and transforms into Sailor Jupiter. She struggles in her first fight, but manages to defeat the demon with a signature attack called Supreme Thunder. Makoto turns out to be the fourth soldier they've been looking for.

EPISODE 7

All the Sailor Scouts are together, and now they have to find the Princess and the Silver Crystal. Luna suspects that Sailor V could be the Princess, so she goes after her. Meanwhile, one of Queen Beryl's servants, Zoisite, is also after Sailor V. Usagi coincidentally meets Sailor V, and is shocked to hear that Tuxedo Mask is their enemy.

EPISODE 8

Usagi calls for Rei, Makoto and Ami, and shows them a flyer about a dress-up contest to look like Nako Nako, a character designed by the famous Minako Aino herself. One of the prizes is a limited production stuffed toy of Nako Nako. Usagi's busy trying to finish her homework, but she wants the stuffed toy so badly that she asks the others to do her homework for her. Rei refuses, saying she shouldn't ask others for help so often, but Makoto suggests that they help her because that's what friends are for. Neither Rei nor Makoto yields, and the mood sours.

Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo

www.bo-bobo.com/
www.toei-anime.co.jp/tv/bo-bobo/
www.tv-asahi.co.jp/bo-bobo/
TV Asahi
Creator: Yoshio Sawai
Director: Hiroki Shibata

STORY

In the future, the Margarita Empire plots a scheme to render the entire population of Earth bald, and Bo-bobo, an expert in the Fist of Nose Hair technique, stands in defiance of this outrage along with Don Patch and his friends.

EPISODE 2

Bo-bobo saves a girl from the Shaver Squad of the Margarita Empire, and she decides to travel with him. Later, they meet Don Patch, a mysterious creature claiming to be the don of the wild and crazy Hajikerist gang. Don Patch assumes that the two of them are members of the Wig Gang, enemies of his. How will Bo-bobo deal with Don Patch?

EPISODE 3

Hajike Village, famous for its villagers who dress and act quite strangely, holds an annual Hajike Festival. Bo-bobo and his group arrive at the village, and the chaotic mood of the festival makes Bo-bobo go wild.

EPISODE 4

After a long absence, Don Patch returns to his Hajikerist underlings, and ends up attending a school graduation ceremony. Surprisingly, he is still a student! But Bo-bobo barges in on the ceremony...

EPISODE 5

Bo-bobo and Don Patch suddenly start performing the play *Al no Meikyū—Labyrinth of Love*—in an open area in the forest.



Boken Yuki Pluster World

www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/pluster/
TV Tokyo
Director: Yuji Himaki

EPISODE 33

Beetma and his friends hear about some Plusters being held captive in Amedomuchi's underground hideout, so they hurry off to rescue them. However, Poseihon, a member of Safety, arrived ahead of them, and has challenged Amedomuchi's monsters to a fight.

EPISODE 34

Beetma and the others have gotten separated from Delie and Molly. While searching for them, Varoze appears. The intense rivalry he feels toward Beetma has flared up again, and he refuses to even listen to Tohma's attempt to stop him. A fierce battle ensues...

EPISODE 35

Tohma and Gan have been captured by Zaian and locked up in his secret base under a lake. Although they manage to escape their underground prison, Gan gets injured. Elsewhere, Beetma and Varoze have snuck in to rescue them, but they're having trouble fighting the powerful robot that Zaian sicked on them.

EPISODE 36

Fezzard spots Amedomuchi's airship! Beetma and his friends sneak in to save the Plusters being held captive. However, Amedomuchi notices and takes off with them onboard. In the sky, there's no escape for Beetma and his friends as they're attacked by hideous monsters.

Cho Robot Seimeitai Transformer Micron Densetsu

www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/transformer/
TV Tokyo
Creators: Yuto Ishikawa & Steve Drucker
Director: Hidehito Ueda

EPISODE 46

Hotrod and Rampage chase Thrust through an underground passage on Planet Sabertron. Meanwhile, the kids from Earth who arrived with the Cybertrons also enter the passage, just in time to see Starscream get blown back by an attack.

EPISODE 47

Hotrod and the kids try to escape from the underground passage, but are hindered by the many traps along the way. Meanwhile, Starscream manages to evade a trap set by Doubleface, and continues rushing down the passage.

EPISODE 48

Starscream realizes how powerful Unicron is, and suggests that Megatron cooperate with Cybertron in order to defeat Unicron. But Megatron doesn't listen to him. Starscream feels a strong need to unite all the Transformers, so he attacks Megatron.

EPISODE 49

Megatron is impressed that Starscream has risked his life in order to persuade Megatron, and he agrees to cooperate with Convoy. Cybertron and Destron forces launch an all-out attack against Unicron. However, Unicron sneers at their idea of "powerful" attacks and begins his transformation.

Ai Yori Aoshi ~Enishi~

www.aiyoriaoshi.com/
www.jcstaff.co.jp/
TV Saitama
Creator: Kou Fumizuki
Director: Masami Shimoda

EPISODE 6

Kaoru won't get a summer vacation unless he turns in his graduate school paper on time. The deadline is approaching fast, and Kaoru is going without sleep trying to finish it. People at the Sakuraba residence try to help him, but everything they do turns out to be more of a hindrance than a help. Somehow he manages to turn the paper in on time, so that night, the people at Sakuraba residence decide to celebrate!

EPISODE 7

Everyone at the Sakuraba residence decides to go on a trip. After arriving at the vacation lodge, they begin getting ready for a barbecue at the riverside. Mayu, who is visiting the same place for the summer, appears and joins them. Now everyone's in a party mood, and they begin playing a game.

EPISODE 8

Chika is to participate in the regional swimming relay competition along with Natsuki and Chizuru, her friends from the swimming club. But Chizuru isn't very good at swimming, despite the fact that she belongs to the club. Chika and Natsuki, who are great swimmers, try to coach her, but teaching people how to swim is much more difficult than just doing it. Just as the three are at their wits' end, Tina volunteers to become Chizuru's coach.

EPISODE 9

While Aoi and Kaoru are on a date, they see a young boy and girl holding hands. Kaoru remembers back when he and Aoi were still kids. He's incredibly thankful that Aoi has always loved him. He holds her close and proposes that instead of going home that night, they spend it together, just the two of them.

Ashita no Nadja

www.toei-anime.co.jp/tv/nadja/
asahi.co.jp/nadja/
ABC / TV Asahi
Creators: Izumi Todo & Yui Ayumi
Director: Takuya Igarashi

EPISODE 40

Nadja willingly leaves the Dandelion Troupe and decides to return to Apple Field by herself. She thinks that the director of the Apple Field Orphanage might be able to prove once and for all that she's had the brooch ever since she was little. But the trip from France to England is very long and difficult for a young girl without any companions.

EPISODE 41

After a long trip, Nadja finally returns to Apple Field, but it's not the Apple Field of her memories. There's no sign of her old friends or the director, and the building is in ruins. Nadja loses hope after hearing that the Apple Field Orphanage was closed when the director died.

EPISODE 42

Nadja recalls that the package she received on her 13th birthday was postmarked in London. In the hopes of meeting the one who sent her mother's dress and diary, she sets out for London.

EPISODE 43

Nadja finds out about her father using the lullaby she remembers from her childhood. She's pleased at the small amount of progress. Later, she meets someone new.

Astro Boy— Tetsuwan Atom

astroboy.jp/
www.fujitv.co.jp/b_hp/atom/
Fuji TV
Creator: Osamu Tezuka
Director: Kazuya Konaka

EPISODE 32

The Blue Knight, who fights for robot freedom, appears at an underground robot market. He tries to defeat Ham Egg, the owner of the market, and set the robots free. The Blue Knight begins to talk about his past after Atom asks him why he doesn't try to understand humans without resorting to violence.

EPISODE 33

Nina wants more attention from her father who is always preoccupied with his work. She begs him to get her a fairy. Their robot Friday witnesses the scene between them, and then tries to find her a fairy along with Atom and Kenichi. Meanwhile, Nina's father finds a device that can materialize any image, and tries to use it to create a fairy for Nina.

EPISODE 34

Recently there have been many incidents of lunality theft. Lunality is a precious mineral discovered in a crater on the moon. Snakes and wolves are always spotted at the scene of the crime. Atom finds out that the thief is a boy named Rock and tries to capture him.

EPISODE 35

The supernatural Rock meets a phoenix who tells him that only the worthy may evolve into stronger beings. In the meantime, Atom and Professor Ochanomizu are asked to investigate Phoenix Island, where the ruins of an ancient supernatural civilization are believed to exist.

Avenger

www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/avenger/
TV Tokyo
Director: Kouichi Mashimo

EPISODE 7

Layla and her companions spend the night in the ruins of a (theoretically) abandoned colony.

However, they meet a young man and one of his parents living there in the harsh environment that exists outside the dome cities. Although they're impoverished, their strong will impresses Layla. Meanwhile, the Battle God Volk sends attackers after Layla in order to catch the child of destiny.

EPISODE 8

Goddess Vesta of Mars contemplates the past while riding in a car on the way to Jupiter City. She thinks about many things—separating from friends, the choices that they, the heirs to Mars, were forced to make, and the tragic results of those choices. A piece of Volk and Vesta's past has finally been revealed.

EPISODE 9

The Battle God Volk's subordinates finally succeed in taking Nei away from Layla. They bring her to the rendezvous city where they await Volk. However, Layla and her friends are hot on their trail, and soon arrive in the city.

EPISODE 10

A man appears out of nowhere and startles Layla while she and her companions are camping out. Speedy asks him who he is.

Bakuten Shoot Beyblade G Revolution

www.d-rights.com/beyblade/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/beyblade_g/
TV Tokyo
Creator: Takao Aoki
Director: Mitsuo Hashimoto

EPISODE 45

It's time for the third match between Takao's team and BEGA. Max, who focuses on defense, is pitted against BEGA's Mistrel, whose specialty is varied attacks.

EPISODE 46

As the contest continues, Takao and his team throw themselves single-mindedly into special practice. However, Takao still can't decide who to choose as the fifth combatant, and is considering taking both the fourth and fifth matches himself if necessary.

EPISODE 47

In the fourth match, BEGA intends to have Garland fight. However, Kai, who ended up as the representative from Takao's team, calls on Brooklyn to fight instead. Kai lost to Brooklyn once before and wants a rematch.

EPISODE 48

Brooklyn is said to be a natural-born master of the sport of beyblade, but Kai throws everything he's got into the fight. Will Kai or Brooklyn win this vicious battle?

EPISODE 49

It's time for the final battle. Takao's challenger is Garland, who fights for the honor of his clan, which has mastered many sports. Takao attacks first, but Garland defends and gradually takes control of the fight. Takao gets really fired up in this red-hot battle!

Di Gi Charat Nyo

www.broccoli.co.jp/dejiko/
www.tv-osaka.co.jp/ip/digicharat/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/digicharat/
TV Osaka / TV Tokyo
Creator: Broccoli
Director: Hiroaki Sakurai

EPISODES 65-66

Falling to kidnap Puchiko and entice Dejiko out into the open, the Black Gemagama Gang aims for Usada.

EPISODES 67-68

Digiko shows off one of her seven gadgets, a magical cell-phone. Piyoko wants it so bad!

EPISODES 69-70

Dejiko tries to win the lottery at the shopping arcade. Dejiko thinks she deserves the grand prize, a trip to Hawaii, because she's the main character of the show.

EPISODES 71-72

Usada and Akari planned to meet up at the Manekineko Shopping Arcade. Just as they meet, a hole opens right at their feet, and they fall into it!

FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST

www.sonymusic.co.jp/Animation/hagaren/
mbs.jp/hagaren/
Mainichi Broadcast / TBS
Creator: Hiromu Arakawa
Director: Seiji Mizushima

EPISODE 7

Ed passes the exam, and becomes a nationally licensed alchemist. While studying for the exam, Ed and Al stayed at the house of a man named Tucker. He wants to hold a party to congratulate Ed. Tucker is also an alchemist, and he brings up the subject of the periodic evaluation of nationally licensed alchemists held by the Army. They're required to submit their research every so often.

EPISODE 8

Colonel Mustang tells Ed to take over Tucker's research. However, Ed can't find any motivation to do it, so he leaves it to Al and starts investigating the serial killer—a hot topic in the Army at the moment.

EPISODE 9

Ed and Al visit a coal mine, where they meet a boy named Kayal. He takes Ed and Al to the inn his father runs. The inn has a bar, and the people of the town welcome the two. However, as soon as they find out that Ed is a nationally licensed alchemist, they change their attitude and kick them out of the inn.

EPISODE 10

On the way to visit the water city Aquaroid, Ed gets arrested for using alchemy. Currently, the city is in an uproar because of a mysterious thief who goes by the name of Siren. A trace of alchemy is the only clue about the thief, and that's why Ed's alchemy drew suspicion.

Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu

www.fujitv.co.jp/b_hp/fullmeta/
www.kadokawa.co.jp/fujimi/
panic/panic.html
Fuji TV
Creators: Shouji Gatou & Shikidouji
Director: Yasuhiro Takemoto

EPISODE 14

Jindai High never has enough rooms for all the clubs, so some clubs have begun holding meetings in various places without permission. For instance, the Photography club holds meetings in the P.E. equipment room, and the Biology club uses the Home Economics room. Kaname runs around school trying to persuade them to stop it because they're inconveniencing others. Then the Social Studies club (which only has two members) agrees to vacate their room under one condition—they must have a competition to see who can pick up the most dates. Whichever club wins this competition can have their club room. Many groups participate because they all desperately want a room of their own. Sosuke is asked by the Photography club to represent them because he's good-looking and gutsy.

FINAL EPISODE

Sosuke ordered gun parts from a Belgian merchant. But instead of the parts he ordered, he receives a stainless steel container full of a suspicious fluid. It turns out to be a biological weapon that delivers airborne bacteria, developed with the latest biotechnology. During lunch, Sosuke calls up the merchant to complain, but is forced to leave the classroom when his teacher Kagurazaka summons him. As Sosuke leaves, his classmate Onodera enters the room. He just bought some super spicy curry bread, quite popular among the students. Onodera eats the bread, but it's so hot that he steals all the other students' water. He finally notices the untouched container on Sosuke's desk. Desperately wanting a drink, Onodera opens up the tightly secured, double-reinforced container!

Gilgamesh

www.gilxx.com/
www.fujitv.co.jp/b_hp/gilgamesh/
Fuji TV / Kansai TV
Creator: Shotaro Ishinomori
Director: Masahiko Murata

EPISODE 6

The Hotel Providence comes under attack, and Kiyoko is kidnapped by Novem and the rest of the Gilgamesh gang. In order to save Kiyoko, her younger brother Tatsuya and the young members of Orga head out to the ruined airport where Novem and his gang are hiding out.

EPISODE 7

The ties between Tatsuya and the boys and girls of Orga are getting stronger and stronger. Soon, he begins to use a paranormal power called Duminas, the same power the other youths of Orga have. Kiyoko objects to Tatsuya getting involved, worried that they will take advantage of him and use him in battle. But Tatsuya scorns her advice, feeling that she's treating him like a child.

EPISODE 8

Kiyoko runs away from the hotel after getting into an argument with Tatsuya, but she's so worried about him that she doesn't go very far. One of the countess's people finds Kiyoko and takes her back to the hotel. After a conversation with the countess (Gräfin von Werdenberg), she decides to leave her brother and the hotel once again, in order to become a Tuner.

EPISODE 9

Trying to stop Enkidu and the Gilgamesh group from destroying the world, Gräfin von Werdenberg meets with Dr. Enuma of the Mitlight Corporation. Dr. Enuma invents a device to fix the abnormal planetary magnetism that Enkidu caused, and restores the world to what it once was. However, Gilgamesh is secretly plotting to destroy the device.

GUNGRAVE

www.gungrave.com/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/gungrave/
TV Tokyo
Creator: RED ENTERTAINMENT
Story & Character Conception: Yasuhiro Nightow
Director: Toshiyuki Tsuru

EPISODE 6

Big Daddy, the boss of Millennium, owns a vacation home in the mountains. There, Brandon reunites with Maria, and he ends up being her escort to a business party attended by Big Daddy.

EPISODE 7

It's been five years since Brandon and Harry joined Millennium, and the two of them have proven to be very promising new members. Then one day, Harry is targeted by the assassin Bunji Kutou.

EPISODE 8

Their wish is granted—Harry and Brandon have been inducted into Millennium's "family." At the outdoor party where they're introduced to the leaders, they see Sid, Big Daddy's right hand man and also an old friend of Bear's.

EPISODE 9

An assassin is released from prison, and one of his former associates shows him a secret research project that their old organization Lightning has been working on. Their plan is to revive the dead and use them as invincible soldiers.

EPISODE 10

Lightning has started their attack on Millennium. Harry sends huge numbers of reinforcements to the battlefield but keeps receiving reports that they're being annihilated. Meanwhile, Brandon heads for Lightning's headquarters.

Choseishin Gransazers

www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/gransazers/
sazer.konami.com/
 TV Tokyo
 Directors: Hirochika Muraishi
 & Kenji Suzuki

EPISODE 7

Tenma has a date with Maki—a girl who works in the office of a motorcycle courier company. While on their date, Maki sustains serious injuries when they're attacked by Karin. She has to undergo an emergency surgery performed by a doctor named Akira Dentsuin, aka Sazer Remls. He's from the Wind Tribe, and fights for Karin.

EPISODE 8

In order to find out more about Karin, Horiguchi visits a certain Dr. Nakajo. There he learns that a woman named Karin Saeki died 20 years ago. On the way home, Horiguchi is attacked by Karin. Fortunately for him, Ken happened to be in the area, and with great difficulty the two of them manage to repel Karin's attack. Once Karin starts retreating, Ken continues to chase after and attack her.

EPISODE 9

A giant Cloud Dragon appears and carries off the wounded Choseishin Garuda. Ken is pained that he hurt Garuda so badly. Meanwhile, a rift is forming between Karin and the Wind Tribe. The Wind Tribe has heard all along that they need to defeat Tenma and his tribe in order to save the world, but they're finding it increasingly difficult to believe that Tenma is the bad guy. Elsewhere, Misonogi is beginning to mobilize in response to the current crisis.

EPISODE 10

Acheronian invaders appear from outer space, and Misonogi begins to take action. Karin reveals the identity of the Acheronians and attacks the Gransazers. In the face of this crisis, the Gransazers manage to unite into a single fighting force. Only Sazer Remls continues to fight alongside Karin, because he doesn't yet know her true identity.

CHRONO CRUSADE

<http://chrno.com/>
www.kadokawa.co.jp/fujimi/chrno/chrno.html
 Fuji TV
 Creator: Daisuke Moriyama
 Director: Yu Kou



STORY

Rosette is an exorcist who belongs to the Magdalan Order. She chose this job to look for her brother Joshua, who disappeared in a demon-related incident. Traveling along with her is Chrno, a very powerful demon that looks like a young boy. Even though she's an exorcist and he's a demon, they come to trust each other and work together to resolve demonic incidents.

EPISODE 1

As always, Rosette ends up destroying the area around her when she exorcizes the demons. Her superior Sister Kate scolds her again, but Rosette doesn't let it get her down. She's visited by Elder, one of the aged leaders of the Magdalan Order who's been researching new weaponry. Elder informs her that he's created a new type of explosive cartridge called the Gospel, which is said to have more than double the power of the Sacred Spirit, the anti-demon tip used until now.

EPISODE 2

Elder invented a new type of bullet called the Spirit. The bullet packs a demon inside and kills the enemy by unleashing a huge amount of demonic power when the bullet hits the target, thereby freeing the demon. Chrno seems to disapprove of this dangerous bullet for some reason. However, having tasted the power of Elder's new bullets when she used the Gospel, Rosette wants to test the power of the Spirit, too. When she's sent into the field, she decides to take the experimental bullet without telling Elder.

EPISODE 3

A young girl named Azmaria possesses special powers that people believe she received from God. She lives with her foster father Ricardo, who's actually a demon worshipper and who always has a demon around him. Rosette's mission is to protect Azmaria from her father and the demon, who try to take advantage of her special powers. Rosette sneaks into the hotel where they live and encounters the demon!

Crush Gear Nitro

www.crushgear-nitro.net/
www.nagoyatv.com/crush/
 Nagoya TV / TV Asahi
 Creator: Hajime Yatate
 Director: Tetsuro Amino

EPISODE 40

Marco, a strong gear fighter who has defeated Masaru before, falls into a situation where he can't become champion if he loses a single fight. He was hoping to use the cash prize for piano lessons for his sister, but that seems unlikely now. He's been asked to lose to You in the next match, in exchange for them promising to make him a movie star...

EPISODE 41

Kouda finally hears about the championship and gears up to win it. But he realizes a critical weakness in himself—he's scared of being stared at by crowds of people. In other words, he's extremely shy.

EPISODE 42

At last, the two brothers TB and ZD fight head-to-head. But ZD's old knee injury recurs after a number of severe battles. TB tries to withdraw, saying he can't fight ZD in that condition, but ZD gets angry at TB's naïve attitude.

EPISODE 43

You rushes ahead on his way to victory, but his mentor Kinjiro keeps putting him through tough training. You begins to doubt Kinjiro's commitment to his victory and asks him what's going on. Kinjiro then talks about the fierce battles of his past.

D.C.—Da Capo

www.hatsunejima.com/
www.kids-station.com/minisite/tokushu/dc/
 TV Kanagawa
 Creators: CIRCUS & Naru Nanao
 Director: Nagisa Miyazaki

EPISODE 20

After Junichi and Nemu confirm their feelings for one another, they stop seeing themselves as stepsiblings and begin to date. However, Junichi's cousin Sakura notices the change in their relationship, and asks him if he's forgotten the promise he made to her six years ago.

EPISODE 21

One day, Sakura hears that Nemu missed school due to illness, and that Junichi stayed home to take care of her. Surprised, Sakura rushes to see Nemu. As she watches Nemu sleep, Sakura feels somehow uneasy.

EPISODE 22

Junichi's maid Yoriko suddenly makes a bizarre request. In lieu of her normal salary this time, she wants to have a date with Junichi. Up till now, she's always had a strange fear of leaving the house, but now she wants to try and get over her fear. She asks that the date be at Junichi's school. She's dreamed of attending school there with him for a long time.

EPISODE 23

Kotori possesses the extraordinary ability to read people's minds, but it suddenly stops working. Unable to understand other people's thoughts, Kotori is wracked with fear.



Kyogoku Natsuhiko Kosetsu Hyaku Monogatari

www.tms-e.com/on_air/kousetsu/
www.hicbc.com/tv/kousetsu/
Chubu Nippon Broadcast
Creator: Natsuhiko Kyogoku
Director: Hideki Tonokatsu

EPISODE 7

Momosuke visits Kyoto, where an acquaintance tells him a story about a series of mysterious murders at Katabiragatsuji. According to the account, several decomposed female bodies have been found. A curious Momosuke heads for Katabiragatsuji with a police officer named Sasayama. Surprisingly, they find the body of Ogin, a member of the Mataichi gang.

EPISODE 8

Momosuke witnesses a bizarre accident while visiting his brother Gunpachiro. Gunpachiro's coworker gets killed by a wedged stone that flies at him from out of nowhere. Momosuke assumes that it's the work of the demon Noteppo, so they begin hunting all over the mountain.

EPISODE 9

In Inarizaka, there's a criminal named Giemon who was thrice killed by beheading. After his publicly displayed head disappeared, people say he's come back to life. Ogin's mother was killed by Giemon, so Ogin is trying to avenge her death. Giemon appears to be an immortal demon, so revenge won't be so easy.

EPISODE 10

Momosuke is asked by a man named Kyoemon to find his bride Shiragiku, who ran away on their wedding night. Momosuke asks Mataichi for help, but he's not interested. However, Ogin tells Momosuke that the retired priest Ryojun should know where Shiragiku is, so Momosuke decides to find her by himself. When Momosuke visits Ryojun, he sees a mysterious woman sitting nearby.

Meitantei Conan ("Detective Conan")

www.tms-e.com/
www.ytv.co.jp/conan/
Yomiuri TV / Nihon TV
Creator: Gosho Aoyama
Director: Taiichiro Yamamoto

EPISODE 341

The designer, Haibara's father's friend, was poisoned! They found poison on his hand, but how did the culprit manage that?

EPISODE 342

Conan and Ran are invited to the wedding of one of Sonoko's friends Shinya, the heir to a huge financial conglomerate. Just before the ceremony, someone kidnaps his fiancée Akane!

EPISODE 343

Ran goes to the convenience store with Sonoko and their teacher Ms. Jody. They hear a rumor that one of the workers, Nanagawa, has been stealing from the store. However, Nanagawa was in the same class as Ran and Conan in junior high, and Ran can't believe that Nanagawa would do something like that. She's too honest. But can they prove it without Conan?

EPISODE 344

Ran calls Conan and tells him about three strange customers who frequently use the restrooms in the convenience store. However, goods only go missing on days that Nanagawa works. Maybe they can uncover the culprit by figuring out what tasks Nanagawa always does.

Mermaid Melody Pichi Pichi Pitchi

www.tv-aichi.co.jp/tv/pichi/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/pitch/
TV Aichi / TV Tokyo
Creators: Michiko Yokote
& Pink Hanamori
Director: Yoshitaka Fujimoto

EPISODE 33

A new amusement park was just built in the town where Lucia and her friends live. After they find out about it, Lucia and Hanon ask Kaito and Mr. Mitsuki to check it out with them. But Rina is worried that the water imps may have set a trap for them at the amusement park. She tries to warn Lucia and Hanon, but her words fall on deaf ears.

EPISODE 34

An abalone water imp named Auri appears before Lucia and her friends, claiming it is there to learn divination from master fortuneteller Madame Taki. Madame Taki is irritated by Auri's constant troublemaking, but agrees to give Auri lessons in fortunetelling in order to see whether the troublesome water imp has a knack for divining the future or not. Auri's first assignment was to divine the next day's weather. Auri called for rain, but the next day was bright and clear. Thinking that as long as it rains sometime during the day, the prediction would be considered correct, Auri begins to perform a rain-making ritual.

EPISODE 35

Hanon notices Mr. Mitsuki's weird behavior and begins to worry that maybe it's because his thoughts are on a certain mermaid from his past. Ever since Mr. Mitsuki mentioned the existence of this mermaid, Hanon hasn't been able to get it out of her mind. She decides to go and ask him for more details. He tells her that the mermaid he knew was an orange-haired one that she and Lucia and Rina haven't met before.

EPISODE 36

A toddler wanders into the hotel where Lucia and the others are living. Lucia ends up looking after the little tot all by herself while she waits for Madame Taki and the mermaids to come home from shopping.

NARUTO

www.naruto.com/
pierrot.jp/title/naruto/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/naruto/
TV Tokyo
Creator: Masashi Kishimoto
Director: Hayato Date

EPISODE 58

Lee has been checked into a medical facility, and Gaara sneaks into his room, planning to kill him! Naruto is also a patient there, and he and Shikamaru burst onto the scene. While they're glaring at each other, Shikamaru asks why Gaara wants to kill Lee. Gaara blithely replies that he just wants to, and then starts telling them about the terrible life that turned him into an assassin.

EPISODE 59

It's time for the intermediate ninja exam, and Hidden Leaf Village is in a festive mood. However, Naruto worries that he won't be able to pass the test since he's not sure he can win against an opponent who has dedicated his or her life to killing bad people like Gaara. It's rare to see Naruto lose courage, but Hinata cheers him up.

EPISODE 60

The first round of Naruto's fight with Neji has begun. Naruto attacks, but Neji reads all of his moves and counters them.

EPISODE 61

All of Naruto's attacks have been casually defeated by Neji's defense. Then Neji's special attack explodes against Naruto, sealing his chakras!

ONE PIECE

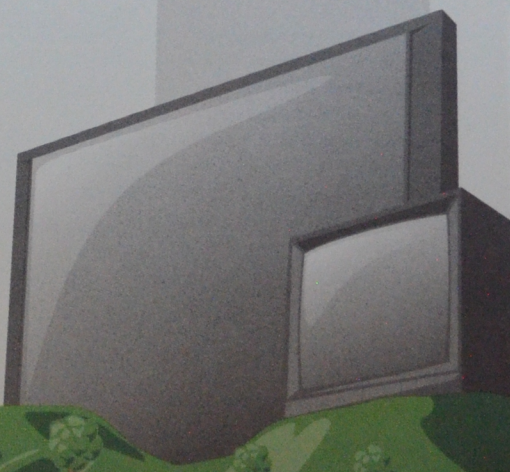
www.toei-anime.co.jp/tv/onep/
www.fujitv.co.jp/b_hp/onepiece/
Fuji TV
Creator: Eiichiro Oda
Director: Konosuke Uda

STORY

Nami and Gun Fall defeat Hotori and Kotori, two of the divine soldiers, during the three-way fight between Shandia, Luffy's group and the divine soldiers. Meanwhile, a Shandia warrior named Kamakiri finds out that Enel's body is made of lightning, but before he can inform his allies, Enel kills him. The fight started with 81 warriors, but only 25 now remain. Enel's prediction that "only five survivors will remain" might come true after all.

EPISODE 174

Nami picks up the repaired *Waver* from Bishop Pagaya. With the *Waver*, Nami can travel through the sky at vastly improved speeds. Meanwhile, in the midst of an ancient city, Robin's fighting hard against Yama, the leader of the divine soldiers. Robin's respect for history means she has to protect the ruins. She fights a tough battle, and regains her lost motivation to study history. In the ruins, there might be a Poneglyph describing the true events of history, so she can't let Yama damage the ruins any more. She decides to lure him out into the open. Yama has a deadly attack called *Axe Mountain*, which he used to kill Genbou. Yama puts on ten *Axe Dials*, and dashes toward Robin!



Inu Yasha

www.sunrise-inc.co.jp/yasya/
www.ytv.co.jp/inuyasha/
Yomiuri TV / Nihon TV
Creator: Rumiko Takahashi
Director: Yasunao Aoki

EPISODE 132

In a village where only women live, a demon that had been sealed in a picture-scroll comes to life. The demon's true body was in the depths of the river, but its parts have merged together once more, and its true nature has become visible.

EPISODES 133 & 134

The corpse of a nun disappeared from a temple blown away by evil. About the same time, a woman who looks just like the corpse appears before Sesshomaru. The woman's name is Sara. She is apparently a princess of the Asano clan, and in the past, Sesshomaru saved her castle. She was reborn into another body at the moment of her death, and to thank Sesshomaru she turns Inu Yasha's comrades into glass statues and steals his sword, intending to give it to Sesshomaru. However, Sesshomaru discovers Sara is possessed by a spirit that plans to possess him as well.

EPISODE 135

Miroku's master, the priest Mushin, is near death, so Miroku and Inu Yasha set out to fulfill his last request. Apparently, he wants to drink a famous liquor made by people who have dedicated their lives to Japanese saké.

EPISODE 136

Inu Yasha and company meet up once again with the old lady who exorcizes demons, and end up helping her fight. People say an invisible demon sneaks in and steals every jewel it can get its hand on.

Kaleido Star

www.kaleidostar.jp/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/kaleidostar/
TV Tokyo
Creator & Director: Junichi Sato

EPISODE 33

Rosetta officially joins Kaleido Stage. Carlos wants Rosetta to perform the Diablo Show that she's so good at, but she wants to try a new challenge instead—the aerial swing. Her desire to do this stems from admiration for Sora, who has mastered the aerial swing as well as the phantom techniques. However, when Rosetta tries it, she soon discovers it's not as easy as it looks.

EPISODE 34

It's their first day off in a long time. All the girls from Kaleido Stage are making plans for the holiday—all except Sora, who was called in by Carlos. Sora is bummed out about having to give up her holiday to come in to work, but she's stunned to hear what Carlos has to say. It seems that Sora has been asked to do a guest performance on the stage where Layla is the main performer!

EPISODE 35

Kaleido Stage's performance of *Dracula* is a raging success, but the children are terrified by the blood-curdling show. Sora suggests setting up a "Kids' Stage" in order to keep children from disliking Kaleido Stage.

EPISODE 36

It's time for Circus Festival, the circus extravaganza put on once every three years by the crème-de-la-crème of stage performers. Layla won first prize in this festival some years back, but this time she's trying to get either Sora or Mei to team up with Leon and perform. But then Mei gets seriously injured during a live performance.

Kamen Rider 555 ("Masked Rider Faiz")

www.toei.co.jp/tv/555/
www.tv-asahi.co.jp/555/
TV Asahi
Creator: Shotaro Ishinomori
Director: Ryuta Tasaki

STORY

Takumi knows he's an Orphnoch and believes he killed the Ryusei Juku members, so he's been refusing to become Faiz. However, Mari's memory reveals the truth, and once again, Takumi puts on the belt and transforms into Faiz. He acquires the Faiz Blaster, which upgrades him to the Blaster Form, and then defeats the strong Dragon Orphnoch. He also withdraws from Smart Brain and decides to risk his life by confronting Lucky Clover. Sawada takes Takumi's place in battle because Takumi was already injured. But Sawada's body has reached its limit, so Takumi and Mari rush out to the battlefield to save him. They're too late, and Sawada is defeated by Lucky Clover. In his final moments, Sawada regains a human heart and the smile he once had.

EPISODE 41

Faiz (Takumi) and Kaixa (Souka) face Lucky Clover, who killed Sawada. Mihara also accepts his cruel fate, transforming into Delta and joining the other two. Lucky Clover has no choice but to retreat in the face of three Kamen Riders. Takumi safely returns from the battle, and Mari and Keitaro warmly welcome him back, but Kusaka still has some doubts about him. In the meantime, the two detectives Soeno and Sawamura happen to see a girl named Yuka at a nursing facility operated by Smart Brain. They become more suspicious than ever that Smart Brain might be involved in a mysterious murder case that occurred at Yuka's high school. However, an elite officer from the Metropolitan Police named Minami orders them to terminate their investigation. At the same time, Minami notices something in a photograph of Yuka.

EPISODE 42

Lucky Clover goes after Yuka to compensate for their dwindling membership. But Yuka will have to face an even more difficult ordeal.

Kimi ga Nozomu Eien

www.kiminozo.co.jp/
TV Saitama
Creator: âge
Director: Tetsuya Watanabe

STORY

Mitsuki becomes depressed when she thinks about all the things that she lost in order to be with Haruka, Akane and Takayuki. Haruka spends every day looking forward to Takayuki's visits to the hospital, not realizing that it's already been three years since the day of the incident. Her older sister Akane has been struggling with how to tell her the truth.

EPISODE 7

Takayuki and Mitsuki begin to have doubts about their relationship. The harder they try to protect what they have together by telling themselves it's all right, the more anxious they grow. Meanwhile, Haruka, who doesn't know anything is wrong, is just happy every time she sees Takayuki's face.

EPISODE 8

Mitsuki moved in with Takayuki. She's glad to be cooking for two instead of one, but at the same time, she can't help feeling empty, knowing that Takayuki's heart leans toward Haruka. Meanwhile, Haruka naïvely enjoys the time she spends with Takayuki.

EPISODE 9

Everything is becoming a burden for Takayuki—his relationship with Mitsuki, his relationship with Haruka, all of it. Mitsuki is also worn-out from the seemingly unsolvable problems in her relationship with Takayuki. Day after day she sheds bitter tears, wondering how it got so bad, and whether she will ever smile again.

EPISODE 10

Getting her memory back little by little, Haruka begins to grow suspicious. There will come a day when she will find out everything—Takayuki can't bring himself to think about it.

Konjiki no Gash Bell!!

www.toei-anime.co.jp/tv/gb/
www.fujitv.co.jp/b_hp/gashju/
Fuji TV
Creator: Makoto Raiku
Director: Tetsuji Nakamura

EPISODE 32

A girl named Shion who transferred to Kiyomaro's school attacks Gash in order to obtain fragments of the magic mirror. She was told that if she collected all the fragments of the mirror, she would be able to stay with her partner Nyralato even after the demon battles end. Gash sympathizes with her heartfelt desire and hands over the fragments.

EPISODE 33

Grisa guides Kiyomaro and his friends to some ruins where the last fragment of the magic mirror is believed to be left untouched. When they finish collecting all the fragments of the mirror, Grisa takes the mirror and runs over to his partner. It was all a trick! He used Shion to obtain the magic mirror for himself!

EPISODE 34

The true purpose of the magic mirror is to boost the power of demons. Grisa gains more power from light cast off the mirror and vanquishes Nyralato. Grisa and his partner have trampled all over Shion for the sake of their petty ambition. Kiyomaro and Gash can't forgive them, and decide to fight the more powerful Grisa and his partner.

EPISODE 35

Kiyomaro and Gash are almost defeated by Grisa's overwhelming power. Just as they're about to be killed by him, Shion charges Grisa's partner and knocks the magic mirror out of his hands.



Shutsugeki! MACHINEROBORESCUE

www.sunrise-inc.co.jp/mrr/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/mrr/
TV Tokyo
Creator: Hajime Yatate
Director: Mamoru Kanbe

EPISODE 45

Ace can't accept the fact that he didn't get the highest grades in the class even though his scores were perfect in both writing and practical application. And the teachers won't explain what happened! Elsewhere, the brand new luxury liner *Poseidon III* goes out of control and crashes into a tanker due to some engine problem. MRR heads out to help, but for some reason the MachineRobos stop working.

EPISODE 46

Jey's on leave for the first time, so he heads out to buy salt to make the rice balls he loves so much. Knowing this, the members of MRR watch over him to make sure he doesn't get into any trouble.

EPISODE 47

Jey and Makoto practice flying in MachineCommander together. The people around them think it will make them get along better, but Jey and Makoto soon start arguing about the proper way to control it. They continue bickering without even noticing that they've strayed from the planned flight path. MachineCommander enters a collection of thunderclouds, and a lightning strike knocks out the controls.

EPISODE 48

Makoto's group brings back a disk about Disaster, and MRR starts analyzing it. Meanwhile, Taiyoh's teachers and friends are a bit worried about his overconfident attitude in recent rescues. They feel his cockiness might cause him to make a dangerous mistake.

Sonic X

www.sonicteam.com/sonic/
www.tms-e.com/on_air/sonic/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/sonic_x/
TV Tokyo
Creator: Yuji Uekawa
Director: Hajime Kamegaki

EPISODE 33

Chris is going to move from his familiar town to the capital. He's sad to be separated from Sonic and his friends, but their promise of a reunion cheers him up a bit. Meanwhile, Eggman hacks the computer of the national military organization GUN and discovers a top secret project that had been shelved.

EPISODE 34

One of the Chaos Emeralds is stolen from a museum. Chris watches the news on TV and is astonished to see the photo of the suspect. Without a doubt, it's Sonic!

EPISODE 35

Sonic is imprisoned on Prison Island for the theft of the Chaos Emerald. But the crimes believed to have been done by Sonic are in fact the work of Shadow, one of Eggman's minions. Chris knows the truth and tries to save Sonic. Meanwhile, Eggman and Shadow are also heading toward Prison Island, the location of GUN central control.

EPISODE 36

Shadow kidnaps Chris during the confusion on Prison Island. When Chris wakes up, he finds himself in a space colony called Ark that was built several decades ago. The place holds sad memories for Shadow—he remembers being separated from someone who was once important to him.

Survival—No Man's Planet

www.nhk.or.jp/anime/survive/
NHK Kyoiku
Director: Yuichiro Yano

EPISODE 5

The shuttle drifts to shore, with Luna and her friends sleeping inside. A sudden shock wakes them up. Something seems to be attacking the shuttle, but all they can do is wait inside until the situation is settled. After the shaking dies out, they emerge from the shuttle and see giant footprints.

EPISODE 6

The drinking water on the shuttle has run out. Luna and the others choose Menori as their leader, and split into three groups to search for necessary daily supplies. Bell and Sharla are in charge of fire, Shingo, Kaoru and Chako food, and Menori, Howard and Luna have to find drinking water.

EPISODE 7

Bell and Sharla start a fire, and Kaoru catches some fish. However, Luna and the other two aren't back yet. They went to the mountaintop and discovered that they're on an island.

TANK KNIGHTS PORTRISS

www.sunrise-inc.co.jp/portriss/
www.bandaigv.com/anime/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/portriss/
TV Tokyo
Creator: Wataru Tamori
Directors: Jong-Sik Nam
& Akira Shigino

EPISODE 33

Blue and the others sneak onto one of Dark's forces' supply bases after being briefed on the layout by a young Portriss named Marco. But the supply base turns out to be a trap laid by the base commander Jereed. It turns out that Jereed had taken Marco's friends hostage and forced Marco to lure Blue and the others onto the base. Jereed launches an attack against Blue and Marco and the rest of the group. YUE-MA and Marco get caught up in the destruction around them and end up falling down into an underground cavern.

EPISODE 34

Blue and the others join the Resistance and storm a hill where Dark's forces have mounted their big guns. Blue has the feeling that there's some secret housed in the hill, so he awaits completion of the analysis before launching any kind of attack. But Barrel just wants to stop the shelling, so he takes off to launch an attack on his own. Unfortunately, there was a very powerful magnetic generator buried under the hill, and now the magnetic field is preventing him from moving his body the way he wants to. Dark's forces fire off a barrage of shells targeting his location!

EPISODE 35

Blue and his team attack one of Dark's military trains and free the captives held inside. One of the captives, an old Portriss who's willing to die himself if he can get a shot at Dark's forces, angrily asks what's keeping them from attacking.

EPISODE 36

ROZZE and KYA-REE meet up again with their old buddy Floyd. He tells them that one of their friends who was supposedly killed by Dark's forces is actually still alive, and they infiltrate the enemy encampment.

Takahashi Rumiko Gekijo Ningyo no Mori

www.tms-e.com/
TV Tokyo
Creator: Rumiko Takahashi
Director: Masaharu Okuwaki

EPISODE 7

The sun begins to set as Yuta and Mana prepare to camp by the side of a river, and Yuta remembers an incident from a few hundred years back. He'd heard a rumor about a man selling mermaid flesh claiming it would bring immortality, but it was also said that nothing happened to those who ate it—apparently, the man was selling fake mermaid flesh. However, Yuta accidentally rescues a girl named Natsume who had been attacked by a monk but healed very quickly despite her severe injuries. Natsume's father turns out to be the same man who had been selling the "fake" mermaid flesh.

EPISODE 8

Yuta and Mana run into an injured boy named Nanao, and decide to look after him. After taking some medicine, Nanao instantly recovers and begins telling them his story. Apparently he's running away from home because someone tried to kidnap him. On top of that, he believes that his grandmother ordered the kidnapping. After hearing the story, Yuta and Mana decide to take Nanao home. But when they meet his grandmother, she condemns their actions and tells them that Nanao shouldn't be there.

EPISODE 9

Yuta captures the man who attempted to kidnap Nanao. The man claims to be Nanao's father, and he was just trying to rescue Nanao from the hands of his mother, whose love for Nanao borders on obsession. According to Nanao's father, she's trying to make Nanao eat the flesh of a mermaid so they can live together forever.

PEACE MAKER Kurogane

www.pm-kurogane.com/main.html
TV Asahi
Creator: Nanae Kurono
Director: Tomohiro Hirata

EPISODE 6

Hijikata is away, and the members of the Shinsengumi decide to hold a competition. While they're all showing off their skills with spear duels, footraces and other events, Tetsunosuke challenges Okita, who shows up later, for a match.

EPISODE 7

Tetsunosuke is at a sword shop trying to buy a knife. But just as he reaches for the knife he wants, someone else tries to grab it. The other customer is Suzu Kitamura, the young boy Tetsunosuke bumped into on his way to apply to the Shinsengumi.

EPISODE 8

Tetsunosuke asks Hijikata to let him carry his own sword, but the request is promptly turned down. Todo gives him a bamboo sword instead, but of course Tetsunosuke isn't satisfied with that.

EPISODE 9

Hijikata asks Tetsunosuke and his brother Tatsunosuke to go to the Hyogo harbor on an errand. On the way there, they run into Suzu, who ignores Tetsunosuke. Irritated, Tetsunosuke chases after him and gets separated from Tatsunosuke as a result.

EPISODE 10

Yamanami visits Hijikata and asks to be demoted from vice-commander to treasurer. But Hijikata refuses, and their relationship becomes tense and awkward.

Pocket Monster Advanced Generation

("Pokémon")

www.pokemon.co.jp/
www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/pokemon_ag/

TV Tokyo
Creator: Satoshi Tajiri
General Director: Kunihiko Yuyama
Director: Masamitsu Hidaka

EPISODE 51

The Pokémon contest in Hajitsuge Town has finally begun! Haruka and Agehant have practiced hard for this day, and do an excellent job passing the first round. But their opponent in the second round is the mysterious young girl Musashino, who received the highest score out of everyone in the first round.

EPISODE 52

Satoshi and his friends finish the contest and set out for their next destination, Fentown. On the way, they meet a group of male cheerleaders in school uniforms. To the surprise of Satoshi and the others, Kazuchi is with the cheerleaders—they thought he was at a lighthouse. Apparently, he met the cheerleaders while traveling around studying to be a trainer, and became interested in the group's ability to heal Pokémon by their cheers alone.

EPISODE 53

Satoshi and his friends run across a ranch and end up spending the night at the owner's suggestion. While there, Haruka mentions that she'd like to give her Pokémon the experience of a real battle.

EPISODE 54

Satoshi's group rides a rope gondola up the side of a mountain, but it comes to a stop midway, and no one answers the emergency phone. Satoshi decides that something's up and heads out alone to get help.

R.O.D -THE TV-

www.sonymusic.co.jp/ROD/
Fuji TV
Director: Koji Masunari
Creator & Script: Hideyuki Kurata

EPISODE 5

Nenene has suddenly disappeared. Without clues, the three sisters sit in her room, wondering what to do. Then they get a job from a company called Dokusensha that is attempting to gain a monopoly on all the books in the world. The job calls for them to find a certain book. Dazzled by the pay, the three sisters quit searching for Nenene and head off to Romania, where they sneak into an ancient castle in the middle of a lake.

EPISODE 6

Anita brings home the Parent Day agenda and finds that the subject is going to be book reports. She hates books and refuses to read them, but Kumi enthusiastically attempts to teach her the joy of reading. Watching Kumi go all out for her, Anita begins to reconsider.

EPISODE 7

The sisters look for another book for Dokusensha. They enter a café to think out their strategy, but Michelle suddenly disappears. Then Maggie goes missing, too. All alone, Anita frantically searches for her sisters.

EPISODE 8

Some strange things have been happening at Anita's school. At night when no one is there, the books seem to fly off the shelves, ending up littered all over the place. Is it a prank, a ghost or something else? Anita and Kumi sneak into the school at night to learn the truth!

Saiyuki RELOAD

www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/saiyuki_reload/
TV Tokyo
Creator: Kazuya Minekura
Director: Tetsuya Endo

EPISODE 7

As usual, Sanzo's group has been wiping the floor with the demons that keep attacking them. Suddenly, they spot a little white kitten in the middle of the brush. Goku, Gojyo and Hakkai want to take it with them, but Sanzo's not exactly a fan of the idea.

EPISODE 8

Desperately hungry, Sanzo and the others head for the next town, when they're suddenly attacked by a group of demons. Just then, someone throws bread into the demons' mouths. In agony, the demons hurry away. The bread was made by a young woman named Kourei, and it tasted so terrible the demons fled.

EPISODE 9

Sanzo's group arrives at a city surrounded by huge walls in the middle of the desert. The leader of the city says that the walls will never fall as long as the people obey the city's strict guidelines and live orderly lives.

EPISODE 10

Sanzo's group hangs out in the huge pleasure area of the city. However, Goku gets worried when Hakkai jokes that Sanzo ought to turn into a demon soon, since humans who kill 1000 demons turn into demons themselves—Sanzo's probably killed about that many. Goku gets even more worried when he notices Sanzo's long fingernails (he'd forgotten to trim them) and the pointy ears of a mask some kids put on Sanzo as a prank.

Sakigake!! Cromatie Koukou

www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/cromatie/
www.production-ig.co.jp/anime/cromatie/
www.starchild.co.jp/special/kurukou/
TV Tokyo
Creator: Eiji Nonaka
Director: Hiroaki Sakurai

EPISODE 7

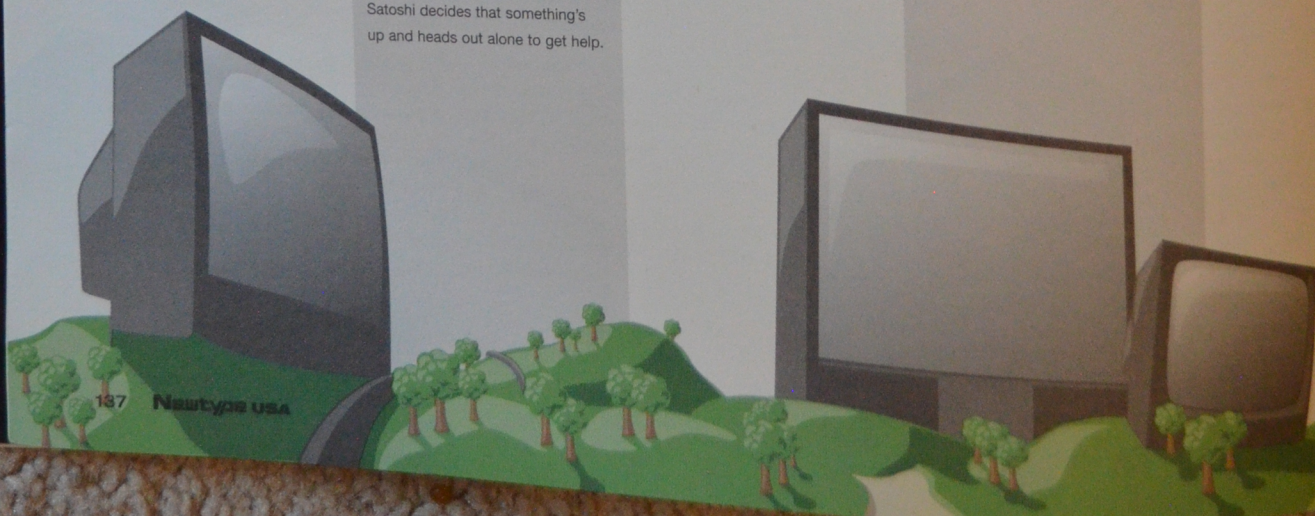
There's a TV show called "Butan" that Kamiyama never misses. He even envies Hayashida for buying a Butan doll. However, Yamaguchi of Destrade High can't understand the jokes in the show, so he stares at the TV screen in confusion.

EPISODE 8

The school's having their periodic health check-up, and everyone enters the doctor's office in their underwear. The students of Cromatie High are so idiosyncratic that the doctor has a hard time dealing with them. A few days later, Mechazawa receives a notice telling him to visit the hospital for a thorough examination. Mechazawa's scared that he might have some kind of disease, but that can't be the case!

EPISODE 9

Kamiyama and the others visit Maeda to throw him a birthday party. What could be more fun than throwing an all-out bash for their classmate? The other day, Mechazawa surprised his classmates by bringing his younger brother Mechazawa Beta to school. Mechazawa Beta looks just like his older brother, and that's probably because they share the same blood...er, oil.



WHAT'S ON TV - JAPAN

Tantei Gakuen Q

www.tbs.co.jp/tantei-q/
www.q-club.jp/

TBS

Creators: Seimaru Amagi
& Fumiya Sato

Director: Noriyuki Abe

EPISODE 28

Kyu and Meg get trapped in an underground prison while exploring the old school building. To make matters worse, Meg was bitten by a habu snake someone had released inside, and her life is now in danger. Kyu finds a diary that seems to have been left by an inmate, and he uses it to find clues to help them escape from the prison. Kinta worries about them not coming home, and he asks Ryu and Kazuma to help investigate the old school building. He even gets Goda and Shishido from the A class to come along!

EPISODE 29

At the prestigious Shibusawa Academy, there's a rumor that someone's collecting snuff videos—videos that show real homicides taking place. Then a seventh grade girl named Emina Ogura disappears. The Academy believes that her disappearance is related to the rumor, and they ask the DDS to investigate. Ryu and Meg disguise themselves as transfer students and start investigating the Academy.

EPISODE 30

Someone murdered two students at Shibusawa Academy named Kogure and Asabuki, and video footage of the killings were published on the Academy's private network. Just before Asabuki was killed, she called Ryu and said she had something she wanted to show him concerning the various incidents. Ryu finds a series of labeled video tapes and realizes that No. 7 is missing.

EPISODE 31

Ryu uses himself as bait to capture the murderer, who gives up and confesses why the murders were carried out. The confession leads to an unexpected conclusion.

UFO Princess Valkyrie—Junigatsu no Yasokyoku

www.tokinoyu.net/

Chubu Nippon Broadcast

Creator: Kaishaku

Director: Nobuhiro Takamoto

EPISODE 7

A karaoke contest is going to be held in the marketplace. The Tokino family's TV has gone on the fritz, so Valkyrie decides to enter the contest to win a TV. Meanwhile, Akina tries to prove that she's not tone-deaf, and forces Hydra to sing a duet with her in the contest.

EPISODE 8

Valkyrie begs to go on a field trip, and ends up heading to a snow-capped mountain along with Sanada and her cat-eared maid squad. Akina and Hydra accompany them as well, but they get lost on the mountain.

EPISODE 9

As Akina studies magic in an ancient book, the magic gets out of hand, and she winds up merging bodies with Hydra over and over again. "Akidra" has the abilities of both Akina and Hydra.

EPISODE 10

Akidra uses her increased abilities to see visions, one of which is of 12 black moons around Planet Valhalla. Valhalla's moons have been referred to as "the 12 black moons" since ages past, but there are actually only eight moons. What does the image imply, and does it have something to do with Valkyrie Ghost, who frequently visits Kazuto?

Wagamama Fairy Mirumo de Pon! Golden

www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/mirumo/
www.ciao.shogakukan.co.jp/milmo/
TV Tokyo

Creator: Hiromu Shinozuka

Director: Kenichi Kasawi

EPISODE 84

Mirumo and the others follow Kaede and her classmates on their field trip. However, Akumi, Rat and the Warumo Gang have laid a trap targeting Mirumo's partner Kaede instead of Mirumo. Their trap draws Kaede deep into a forest.

EPISODE 85

In order to defeat Kaede, Dark gives Akumi a bottle of spray that will reverse Kaede's personality. Akumi eagerly tries to spray Kaede but accidentally showers Mirumo instead.

EPISODE 86

On the way home from school, Kaede and the others encounter the mystery novelist Kurisu Asaga, who is struggling to come up with an idea for his serial novel. Mirumo and the others try to help him with their magic.

EPISODE 87

Kaede and her classmates practice volleyball with Etsumi, the captain of the volleyball club, in preparation for the school volleyball competition. Then Taeko Akasaka, Etsumi's rival and the captain of the basketball club, shows up and provokes her.

EPISODE 88

Suddenly, a catastrophe occurs in the human world—the sun doesn't come up! It seems that someone stole the fairy watch that manipulates time, and has used it for a nefarious purpose...

Yami to Boshi to Hon no Tabibito

www.avexmode.jp/animation/
yamibou/yamibou.html

www.deen.co.jp/yamibo/

www.orbit-soft.com/yami_tv.html

Mainichi Broadcast

Creator: ROOT (Orbit)

Director: Yuji Yamaguchi

EPISODE 7

Hazuki comes back from an isolated island and remembers when she was living with Hatsumi. One day, she witnessed a high school boy confessing his love to Hatsumi, and realized that her feelings for her sister were stronger than anyone's.

EPISODE 8

The next world Hazuki and Ririsu enter is similar to the Warring States period in Japan. Ririsu is separated from Hazuki, and she accidentally eats the food of the demon fox Meirin, who's been trying to improve her skills. Ririsu ends up helping Meirin as an apology for eating her food. Meanwhile, Hazuki wanders into a bamboo grove, where she meets a girl named Fujihime, who looks just like Hatsumi.

EPISODE 9

Hazuki ends up staying at the bamboo grove stronghold where Fujihime lives. A group of ninjas with mysterious abilities suddenly attacks the stronghold in an attempt to capture Fujihime. The samurai try to fight back, but they're no match for the ninjas.

EPISODE 10

Hazuki and Ririsu find themselves on an immigrant ship in space. Lala, the operating computer of the ship, tells them that all the adults stopped moving for some reason. Out of curiosity, Hazuki and Ririsu start investigating and find out that all the adults are dead. But Lala doesn't understand the concept of death.

Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Monsters

www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/yuugiou/
TV Tokyo

Director: Kunihisa Sugishima

EPISODE 179

Jonouchi, Mai, Pegasus and the Mirror Knight, who has the other Yugi's soul entrapped inside him, appear in front of Dartz. Yugi hesitates to attack the Mirror Knight, making him unable to weaken Dartz. Then, Raphael appears.

EPISODE 180

Dartz activates a third barrier using the Orichalcos Trites, nullifying magic and traps against his monsters while restoring his own life energy. Kaiba counterattacks using the Nameless Dragons card to summon Mirror Force Dragon, but Dartz summons a monster that absorbs the attacks and gains attack power from them. Kaiba has trouble dealing with its heavy attacks.

EPISODE 181

Kaiba runs out of life points, and Kyoko's soul is taken. Yugi remembers Dartz saying that it was all his fault, and is driven to despair. He's almost ready to admit defeat. But his ties to his friends convince him to stand up and fight again. Yugi uses the Nameless Card Pegasus gave him and releases the seals on the Nameless Dragons, allowing him to summon the legendary Three Knights—the true form of the Nameless Dragons.

EPISODE 182

Out of the destroyed Orichalcos barrier, Dartz summons a monster with infinite attack points! Yugi copes with it by using an Infinite Loop generated by the two knights Critias and Hermos, and concentrates the power of the Three Knights on the third knight Timaos.

TV Listings FEB 2004

ABC Family

Kid aimed anime and live-action staples *Digimon*, *Beyblade* and *Power Rangers Ninja Storm* will run each weekday morning in February. Saturdays tout the same plus *Medabots* and America's favorite radioactive college student, *Spiderman*. East meets West as fantastical fun abounds on ABC Family!

www.abcfamily.com

Action Channel

The Action Channel doesn't play around in its anime block airing every Friday at midnight. Episodes of *Fist of the North Star* continue as martial hero Ken devastates ruffians in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Watch heads hit the ground as organs gloriously combust in this killer classic.

www.starzsuperpak.com

Anime Network

If you've not heard, this is the all anime, all the time cable network. Stay riveted as the *Neon Genesis Evangelion Director's Cut* captivates and *New Cutie Honey* steals your heart amidst a sea of classics like *Aura Battler Dunbine* and hot properties like *Chobits* and *Eden's Bowy* (see TV Spotlight). An undeniable anime utopia, Anime Network does it right!

Please note that Anime Network is provided to certain areas. Call your cable provider for more details.

www.theanimenetwork.com

Cartoon Network

New episodes of *Cyborg 009*, *Knights of the Zodiac*, *Dragon Ball GT*, *Teen Titans*, *Transformers Energon* and *Witch Hunter Robin* (see TV Spotlight) will hit the waves this February. Yet another cutting edge line-up from the tastemakers at Cartoon Network.

www.cartoonnetwork.com

FoxBox

FoxBox hits us with the popular *Shonen Jump* manga-turned-anime, as well as *Shaman King*, *Ultimate Muscle*, *Kirby* and *Sonic X*. Don't miss out on the fun-filled Saturday morning offerings.

www.foxbox.tv

International Channel Network

With a very lovely block of anime programming, the I-Channel dishes out solid industry mainstays. *El Hazard: The Alternate World* and *Tenchi Universe* combine with *Fushigi Yugi OVA*, *Dragon Ball GT* and *Black Heaven* to quench the thirst of discerning anime enthusiasts.

www.internationalchannel.com

TechTV

Geneshaft runs each night at 12:30am as TechTV plans for all new anime-themed programming in the coming months. Stay tuned for developments while following the aforementioned sci-fi hit.

www.techtv.com/animeunleashed/

The WB

Saturday morning sports *Teen Titans* (with a theme song by J-pop superstars Puffy Ami Yumi), *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Pokémon*, not to mention *Xiaolin Showdown* and *Jackie Chan Adventures*. US super teens, Japanese card game chaos and Chinese kung fu craziness in droves—it's a world of wacky cool action on the WB!

www.kidswb.com

Disclaimer: As we go to press, specific programming times and dates are not available. Please consult your local listings or the websites listed for the most accurate times and dates.

TV SPOTLIGHTS



Witch Hunter Robin

Present-day Japan. There has been a rise in the number of witches around the world. These witches possess supernatural abilities and pose a threat to the rest of humanity. Enter the STNJ, the Japanese branch of a secretive global organization that suppresses the illegitimate use of witchcraft. Members of the STNJ combat the witches with a blend of technology, forensic science and super-powered team members of their own. Robin, a young girl, has just been transferred to the STNJ as a new hunter. Will Robin be able to strengthen her powers and become part of the STNJ team? So many witches and only a few STNJ members—the odds are not in their favor.



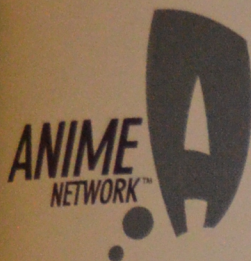
Eden's Bowy

Yorn gazes up at two massive cities floating in the sky and dreams of discovering their mysteries. Without warning, those mysteries come looking for him! Yorn is on a hit list and only a nameless old man and a mysterious young girl can help him on his quest. His quest is to find his long lost mother...and the truth, while killers are hot on his trail! Yorn and his companions race to save the world from the dark designs of the technological overlords who watch from the sky. Can Yorn find his mother before the killers do? Who is the strange girl who stays by his side, and why won't she say anything? Will the answers to these questions be too terrifying to hear? Take your first step into the perilous world of *Eden's Bowy*!



USA NOW

Anime Network Listings - FEBRUARY 2004



Anime Network is the first cable channel in North America dedicated to anime. More markets will be added soon—log on to www.theanimenetwork.com for the latest information on programming and availability!

COMCAST/RCN

On Comcast On Demand, Anime Network is available in Boston, MA; New York; Baltimore, MD; Washington D.C.; Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Philadelphia, PA; Richmond, VA; Detroit and Ann Arbor, MI; Mobile and Huntsville, AL; Charleston, SC; and Savannah, GA.

Anime Network is available to RCN's Impulse on DemandSM subscribers in Manhattan, NY; Boston, MA; Washington D.C.; Maryland; Virginia; and Pennsylvania.

TITLE	PROGRAM
All Purpose Cultural Cat-Girl Nuku Nuku	Episodes 1 - 2
Angelic Layer	Episodes 6 - 7
Aura Battler Dunbine	Episodes 11 - 12
Blue Seed	Episodes 15 - 16
Blue Seed Season Two	Episodes 1 - 2
Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040	Episodes 20 - 21
Chobits	Episodes 1 - 3
City Hunter Season Two	Episodes 1 - 2
City Hunter: Secret Service	Feature
Colorful	Episodes 15 - 16
Dai-Guard	Episodes 23 - 25
Excel Saga	Episodes 20 - 21
Final Fantasy: Unlimited	Episodes 9 - 10
Full Metal Panic!	Episodes 13 - 14
Gasaraki	Episode 25
Golden Boy	Episodes 1 - 2
King of Bandit Jing	Episode 13
Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi	Episodes 1 - 2
Martian Successor Nadesico	Episodes 20 - 21
Najica Blitz Tactics	Episodes 11 - 12
Neon Genesis Evangelion	Episodes 20 - 21
Neon Genesis Evangelion Director's Cut	Episode 21
Neo Ranga	Episodes 1 - 3
New Cutie Honey	Episodes 1 - 3
Noir	Episodes 20 - 21
Orphen	Episodes 22 - 24
Orphen Season Two	Episodes 1 - 2
Princess Nine	Episodes 5 - 6
RahXephon	Episodes 18 - 19
Rune Soldier	Episodes 18 - 19
Saiyuki	Episodes 16 - 17
Sakura Wars	Episodes 1 - 3
Sorcerer Hunters	Episodes 6 - 7
Steel Angel Kurumi	Episodes 23 - 24
Steel Angel Kurumi Season Two	Episodes 1 - 3
Those Who Hunt Elves Season Two	Episodes 7 - 8
Zaion	Episode 1
Zone of the Enders: Dolores	Episodes 13 - 14

CABLEVISION

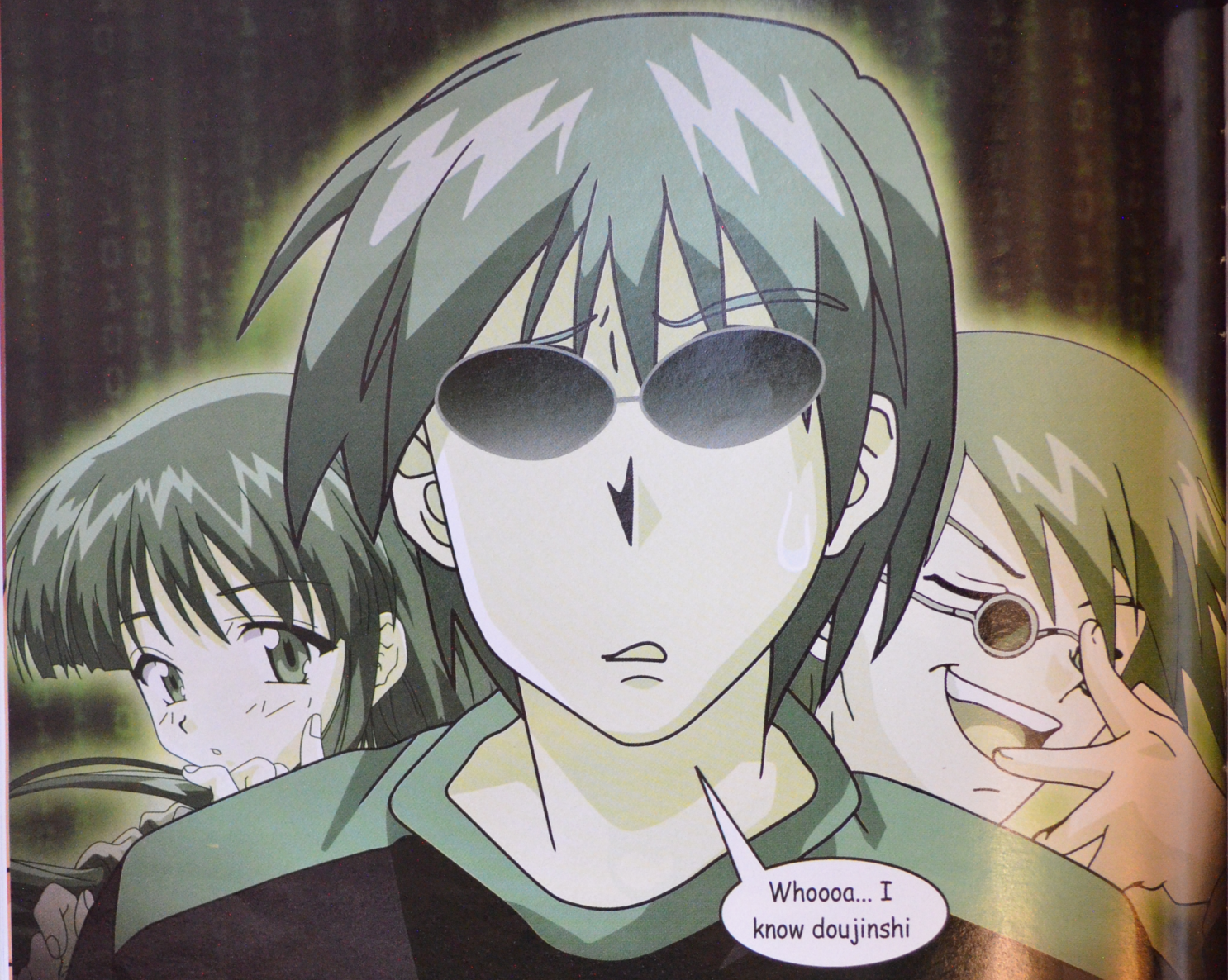
Anime Network is currently available in New York via Cablevision's iO Video on Demand Service.

TITLE	PROGRAM
Angelic Layer	Episode 12
Aura Battler Dunbine	Episodes 18 - 20
Blue Seed	Episodes 1 - 2
Blue Seed Season Two	Episodes 1 - 2
Boogiepop Phantom	Episodes 1 - 4
Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040	Episodes 15 - 17
Chobits	Episodes 12 - 14
City Hunter: Secret Service	Feature
Dai-Guard	Episodes 1 - 4
Excel Saga	Episodes 1 - 2
Final Fantasy: Unlimited	Episodes 4 - 6
Full Metal Panic!	Episode 24
Gasaraki	Episodes 23 - 25
Golden Boy	Episodes 1 - 3
Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi	Episodes 1 - 4
Martian Successor Nadesico	Episodes 21 - 23
Mazinkaiser	Episodes 4 - 5
Najica Blitz Tactics	Episodes 4 - 5
Neon Genesis Evangelion Director's Cut	Episodes 21 - 22
Neo Ranga	Episodes 1 - 3
New Cutie Honey	Episodes 1 - 2
Noir	Episodes 24 - 26
Pretear	Episodes 9 - 10
Princess Blade	Feature
Princess Nine	Episodes 6 - 7
Saiyuki	Episodes 18 - 20
Sakura Wars	Episodes 1 - 2
Sakura Wars Season Two	Episodes 1 - 2
Samurai X	Episodes 5 - 6
Steam Detectives	Episodes 5 - 7
Steel Angel Kurumi	Episodes 25 - 27
Steel Angel Kurumi Season 2	Episodes 1 - 2
Those Who Hunt Elves	Episodes 1 - 3
Those Who Hunt Elves Season Two	Episodes 4 - 5
Wild Arms	Episodes 6 - 7
Zone of the Enders: Dolores	Episodes 19 - 22

TIME WARNER

Anime Network is available in select Time Warner markets coast to coast, including Cape Coral and St. Augustine, FL; Syracuse, NY; Memphis, TN; Corpus Christi, El Paso, San Antonio and Houston, TX; Lincoln, NE; Portland, ME; Shreveport and Houma, LA; Cincinnati, OH; Green Bay, WI; and Garden Grove, Gardena and Chatsworth, CA.

TITLE	PROGRAM
Arc the Lad	Episodes 5 - 7
Aura Battler Dunbine	Episodes 6 - 9
Blue Seed	Episodes 8 - 10
Chance Pop Session	Episodes 12 - 13
Dai-Guard	Episodes 9 - 10
Eden's Bow	Episodes 3 - 5
Full Metal Panic!	Episodes 12 - 14
Gasaraki	Episodes 10 - 12
King of Bandit Jing	Episodes 9 - 11
Martian Successor Nadesico	Episodes 9 - 10
Orphen	Episodes 9 - 11
Princess Nine	Episodes 5 - 8
Tekken	Feature
Voices of a Distant Star	Feature
You're Under Arrest	Episodes 13 - 16
You're Under Arrest	The Motion Picture



03.30

www.rightstuf.com



Parody Advertisement. Comic Party is © KSS / Aquaplus.

From the Director of Serial Experiments Lain
and the Screenwriter of Cowboy Bebop.

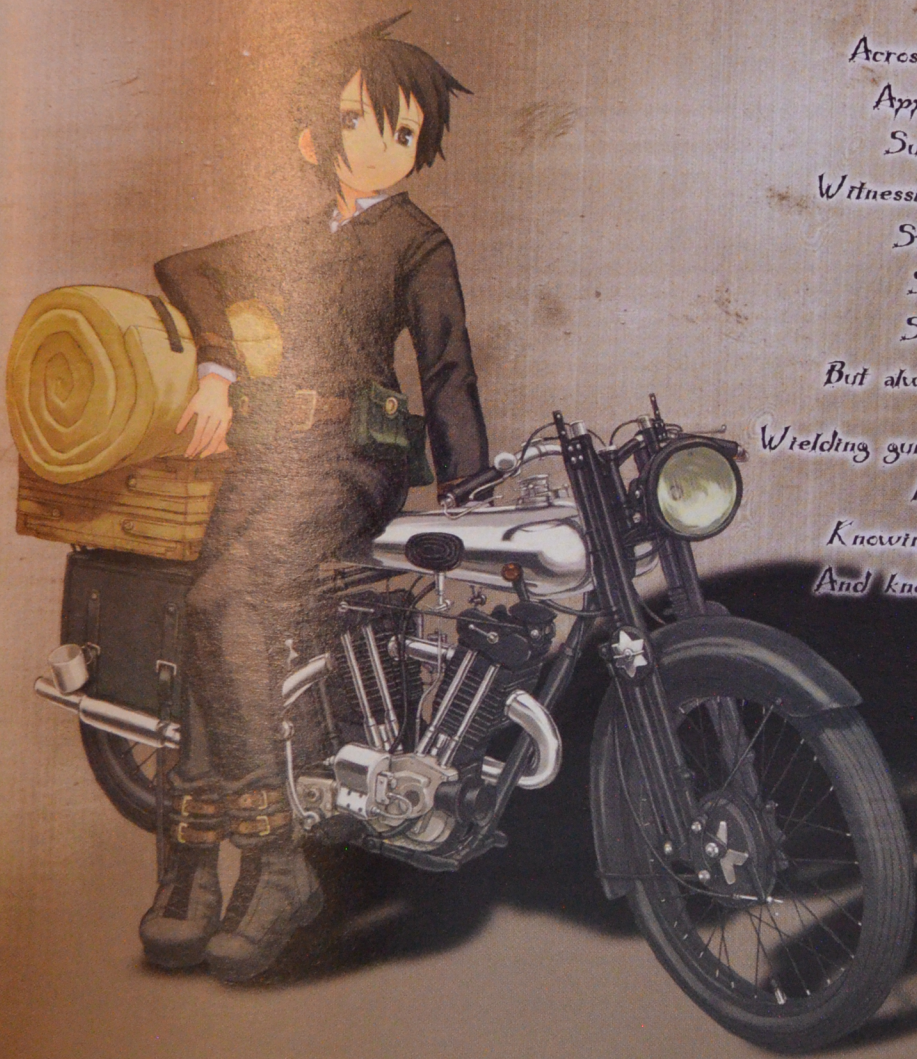


KINO'S JOURNEY

*Kino is a traveler
Sitting astride the back
Of an internal combustion companion-
Drifting through the beautiful world,
The ground rolling beneath, before and beyond,
This is their journey.*

*Across borders they meander-
Appreciating the generous,
Surviving the dangerous,
Witnessing the whims of mankind.
Staying their welcome
Sometimes too long,
Sometimes too short,
But always the same three days.*

*Wielding guns, knives and a piercing wit,
Kino travels along-
Knowing luck, knowing silence,
And knowing when to disappear.*



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learner, the first purchase should be a good handheld English-Japanese/Japanese-English dictionary (buy one from Japan if you can...they're better than the ones you can buy here in the US). Don't cop out by getting something that includes furigana or Latin-letter pronunciation aides, because they just take up space that could be better used for more entries or more example sentences, and eventually you won't need pronunciation aides anyway. You're better off forcing yourself to look up the characters you don't know—you'll learn faster and better that way. Carry that dictionary with you everywhere and look up stuff you don't know (in either direction) whenever you're curious. Always do it immediately after you think of it, because it'll be in context and you'll remember it better.

"The next two purchases should be a kanji (Japanese character) dictionary and a small, simple text (like a children's book). Don't bother with grammar books yet, because all the grammar you'll ever understand right now you'll have to figure out for yourself anyway. Just start reading the book. Look up everything and keep going over it and researching stuff you can't find in the dictionaries until you know what it says. Don't attempt anything else until you're certain you completely understand this first text. Then translate it, and take your translation to a Japanese native speaker and find out how much you still don't understand! (If you don't have a Japanese speaker handy, buy a children's book that has an English version and compare your translation to the English version instead...only don't do that until you're sure you've understood the Japanese version as thoroughly as you can.)

"Once you've done all this, now you can buy a grammar book. Try to buy something fairly scholarly and thorough. Read it cover to cover, and then use what you've learned to re-translate your first text again.

"If you're really dedicated, you can do all of this in maybe one or two month's time, and you'll learn more vocabulary, grammar and kanji than you would've in a typical year-long course at school. You can take it on your own from there. Pick something in Japanese that interests you and keep working your way through it until you're satisfied, then move on.

"For speaking and listening, wait until you have a few words and some grammar under your belt, and then rent some Japanese movies or TV programs and watch them over and over, copying things people say and trying to figure out what they're talking about. The longer you stick with it, the better your listening comprehension and pronunciation will be.

"It takes a lot of time and effort, but if you've got the patience, self-study like this is the best way to go."

Whew! Thanks, Jack. Now go to work!



▲ *Noir*, John Duckett, Bowie, Maryland



▲ *Inu Yasha*, Larry Fullmore Jr., Age 21, Baltimore, Maryland



▲ Youko from *The Twelve Kingdoms*, Rob K., Age 22, Brooklyn



▲ *Final Fantasy 9*, Angela Hughes, Age 18, Utah



▲ *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Daniel Rangel J.R., Age 22, Holland, Michigan



▲ *Kingdom Hearts*, Theresa Zysk, Age 19



▲ *Please Save My Earth*, Mana Hitokui, Age 15, Monroe, Connecticut

FAN ART

Be Real.

The Forum section is meant as a showcase for original artwork only. Please only submit your own original work and do not steal someone else's creative efforts by swiping their art and putting your name on it.

Want your 15 minutes of fame?

All you have to do is submit your best fan art to be the ultimate anime superstar! Use the following guidelines for submissions:

- Artwork sent via e-mail must be a color TIFF or JPEG file, at least 4 x 6 inches, and it should be 300dpi resolution.
- Original artwork sent via postal mail must not be larger than 8.5 x 11 inches. Please be advised that all original artwork received will not be returned.
- Include your name (or pen name), age, title of anime portrayed, and e-mail or home address.

If the prior information is not submitted, we will not be able to print your artistic talents.

Send your art to:

Newtype USA, Inc.
Attn: Forum Editor
P.O. Box 631607
Houston, Texas 77263 USA

or e-mail to:

forum@newtype-usa.com

Newtype forum

ニュータイプ・フォーラム

More Beefcake!

I REAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAALLY LIKE THE MAGAZINE. IT IS WONDERFUL. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH IT, WELL THERE IS ONE THING. I HAVE ONLY SEEN 5 ISSUES, BUT THE CENTERFOLD HAS BEEN A HALFNAKED FEMALE EACH TIME. I WAS WONDERING IF THER WILL EVER BE ANY CUTE GUYS LIKE, SPIKE SPIEGLE OR SAGARA SANOSUKE, OR MAYBE EVEN MIROKU FROM INU YASHA.

WELL THATS ALL. THANKS FOR READING THIS. BYE.

Jamie Posey • Queen Anne, MD

WE REAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAALLY LIKE YOUR LETTER. IT IS WONDERFUL. WE WERE WONDERING IF YOU SAW THE APRIL 2003 ISSUE. WE RAN A CENTERFOLD STARRING THE MEN OF SAIYUKI, WITH THE FOUR SAIYUKI STUDS IN DELIGHTFULLY JAUNTY POSES. IT WAS AWESOME. MAYBE ONE DAY WE'LL HAVE MORE STUDS, AND EVEN A ROBOT STUD (WE CALL IT "MECHA").

WELL THATS ALL. THANKS FOR READING THIS. BYE.

Social Studies

I am Kyle Canady (white male) and I have a friend named Lucky Murphy (Hispanic male). We like to see ourselves as aspiring manga-ka. We can both draw and create our own doujinshi and storylines. One of the best things about this situation is that we both have very different styles of animation. When other people would view our art, there seems to be a little coincidence in whose art they preferred.

It wasn't long until I noticed a similarity in this. It seemed that most Hispanics approved of Lucky's animation and the majority of whites preferred my animation.

?!

ERRORS & OMISSIONS

We do our very best to catch all the mistakes before going to press but sometimes we miss a few and those are the ones that hurt. Our sincerest apologies are extended to both our readers and the subjects of the articles for the translation errors and/or misprints listed below.

DECO3 ISSUE

p149: The correct copyright for *Saint Seiya* is: © 2003 Masami Kurumada / Shueisha, Toei Animation, © 1986 Toei Animation Co., Ltd.

This perked my curiosity. I wondered if there was a reason for one's preference or if it was merely just a coincidence. I had informed my friend of this frequent occurrence and we both decided to conduct a test to discover if there was any relevance to the racial factor. We wanted to keep this survey completely legitimate so we created some ground rules to keep the surveyed completely unaware of our purposes.

The rules were that Lucky and I would both draw a single character on one page with no way of knowing whose drawing was



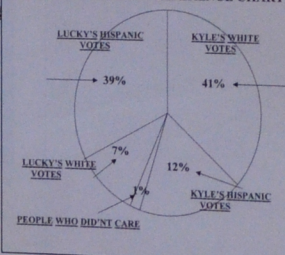
whose. We would then ask random miscellaneous strangers in our community which of the two characters they liked best. Then we would

note whose character they had chosen and that citizen's race. After surveying 100 people we decided that an answer had finally been established.

As the results stated, 41% of whites and 12% of Hispanics preferred Kyle's animation. Lucky's animation was preferred by 39% of Hispanics and 7% of whites. One percent of the surveyed didn't care for either one.

Lucky and I were both satisfied with the outcome of our test and have grown a little wiser because of it. Not only does this help aspiring manga-ka know which brand of animation to use when trying to appeal to a certain racial audience, but it also leads one to look deep within themselves to find yet

RACIAL ANIMATION PREFERENCE CHART



another question: Do you willingly draw your own chosen style of animation or were you subconsciously driven to do so?

Kyle Canady • Freeport, TX

While we applaud your remarkable ability to make gross generalizations based on just two pieces of art and 100 people in your "community," we have to wonder about some of your methods. How, in fact, did you determine whether someone was Hispanic or white? What if, for example, someone just had a really snazzy tan? And did you ask the person his ethnicity before or after they selected the art? How did they feel about being racially profiled by two aspiring manga-ka? Finally, what was the ethnicity of that 1% that didn't like either piece of art? Because we would like to shake his hand.

Language Barrier

Man, was I surprised when I got my first issue (September). You've got twice the content I'd hoped for, a DVD with an entire anime episode (not just trailers), and some sweet manga to boot. Even though I don't support expensive subscription prices, I must say that yours is one of the few that's worth the price.

And now for my question: Do you recommend any books, cassettes, CDs, and so on for learning Japanese? I am hoping to someday visit Japan and would like to speak Japanese beforehand. I also want to import anime without reading subtitles.

Once again, thanks for a great mag. I hope lots of people subscribe so you can stay around for a long time.

Isaiah Sackenheim • Portland, IN

Never at a loss for words, Newtype USA's lead translator Jack Wiedrick responds:

"Because people have different language learning styles, it's hard to recommend something that will be useful to all people. The easy answer is that Japanese is a very well-understood and important world language, so just about any moderately priced (i.e., not cut-rate) learning package that includes a phrasebook, grammar lessons, a reasonably large glossary and maybe some practice tapes and/or CD-ROM will be a good place to start. Publishers can get away with putting out shoddy materials for lesser-known languages, but Japanese is too important and there's too much competition, so most of the packages you're likely to find in your average bookstore are probably of good quality and will work just fine. Pick something that seems to be organized, intuitively and matches your personal style of learning.

"The harder answer is that if you really want to get serious about learning Japanese and are willing to put in the time, then stay away from learning packages. They're too superficial and context-free. For the serious



▲ Sakura Wars, Angela T., Age 14, Sydney, Australia



▲ Tokyo Mew Mew, Starline Hodge, Age 20

LETTERS POLICY

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▲ *Outlaw Star*, Juno Cree, Age 18, Ottumwa, Iowa



▲ *Rurouni Kenshin*, Letticia Panea, Age 11, Utica, Michigan



▲ *Slayers*, Jessica Bracken, Age 14, Thousand Oaks, California



▲ *Wish*, Elle Brennan, Age 14, Rocky River, Ohio



◀ Mamimi from *FLCL*, Anna Bibb, Age 20, West Jordan, Utah



▲ *Lupin the 3rd*, Nicole Cartolano, Age 14, Burbank, Illinois



▲ *Final Fantasy: Unlimited*, Andrea Pizzuti, Age 14, Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan



▲ *Di Gi Charat*, Melanie Milliman, Age 18, Jacksonville, Illinois



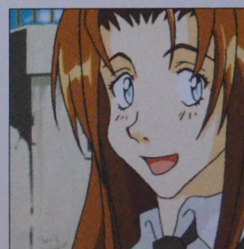
▲ Four from *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam*, Cal, Toronto, Canada



▲ *Rurouni Kenshin*, Jean René Hendricks, Age 19, Cape Town, South Africa



▲ Neji Hyuga and Rock Lee from *NARUTO*, Emily Hu, Age 14



▲ *Trigun*, Kristen (EbonyCalypso), Age 17

◀ Talim from *Soul Calibur 2*, Tracy Trinh, Age 11, Boston, Massachusetts



▲ *Final Fantasy X-2*, Nic Purves, Age 15, Flushing, Michigan

► A Tiny Snow Fairy Sugar, Own Huynh, Age 17, Massachusetts



▲ Kairi from *Kingdom Hearts*, Gretchen Gaither (aka "V-Chan"), Age 16, Lee's Summit, Missouri



▲ Chikage from *Sister Princess*, Andy Lee, Age 15, Duluth, Georgia



▲ Yuna and Rikku from *Final Fantasy X*, Tayeba Al Arrayed, Age 15, Hamed Town, Bahrain Manama



▲ *Chobits*, Christina Fraser, Age 20, Prince Edward Island, Canada



▲ *Fruits Basket*, Kelsea Feathers, Age 14, Puyallup, Washington



▲ *Angelic Layer*, Warinya Chowwiwat, Age 10, Eau Claire, Wisconsin



▲ *Tomie*, Lan Lorady, Age 22, Pennsylvania



▲ Cloud from *Kingdom Hearts*, Pam Gonzales, Age 21, Albuquerque, New Mexico



▲ *FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST*, Kurot, Age 18, Canada

► Xin from *Xin: Legend of the Monkey King*, Lucien Aristis, Age 16, Townsville, Queensland, Australia



► A Tiny Snow Fairy Sugar, Own Huynh, Age 17, Massachusetts



▲ Kairi from *Kingdom Hearts*, Gretchen Gaither (aka "V-Chan"), Age 16, Lee's Summit, Missouri



▲ Yuna and Rikku from *Final Fantasy X*, Tayeba Al Arrayed, Age 15, Hamed Town, Bahrain Manama



▲ *Chobits*, Christina Fraser, Age 20, Prince Edward Island, Canada



▲ *Fruits Basket*, Kelsea Feathers, Age 14, Puyallup, Washington



▲ *Angelic Layer*, Warinya Chowwiwat, Age 10, Eau Claire, Wisconsin



▲ Cloud from *Kingdom Hearts*, Pam Gonzales, Age 21, Albuquerque, New Mexico



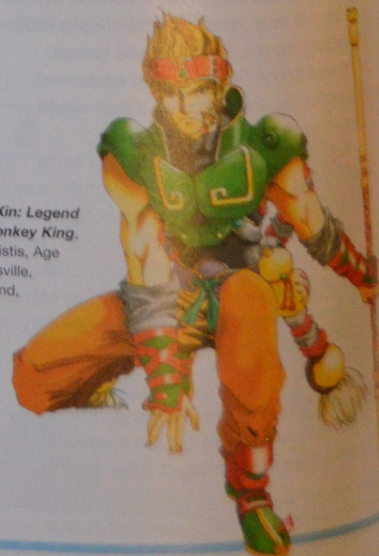
▲ *FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST*, Kurot, Age 18, Canada



▲ Chikage from *Sister Princess*, Andy Lee, Age 15, Duluth, Georgia



▲ *Tomie*, Lan Lorady, Age 22, Pennsylvania



► Xin from *Xin: Legend of the Monkey King*, Lucien Aristis, Age 16, Townsville, Queensland, Australia

NICE TO BE NICE?

by MUN-KEAT LOOI

Hideki gazed over the city of Tokyo sprawling out into the distance before him. From the window of the institute he could look over the parks, offices, shops and crowds of people in between bustling to and fro, place to place. His mind wandered. So much happening, so many stories playing out unbeknownst to him. So much...possibility.

He shook his head. "Must concentrate," he resolved. He focused back on the front of the class. Shimizu-sensei was writing an extravagantly long passage on the board. Shimizu-sensei...she was cute. Sure she was a teacher, but she exuded prettiness. He was such a sucker for that. Hideki sighed. "I'm a guy," he thought. "Ronin or not I should be having a string of dates by now. What's wrong with me?" He gnawed on his already mangled pencil. That didn't help.

The bell rang. The class left. Hideki couldn't wait to get out of there. As he turned to leave, he saw Shimizu-sensei struggling with the mountain of books she had heroically tried to teach them. He sighed. As she caught his eye, he was already halfway toward her desk.

"Thank you Motosuwa-kun," smiled Shimizu-sensei as he struggled with the books, "You are a nice guy." Hideki strained a smile as the weight flattened his palms.

Later, Hideki served at Yorokonde Bar and Grill. "Five beers for the salarymen over there," nudged Yumi.

Yumi-chan was super-cute. As he poured the beers, he couldn't help gazing dreamily at her as she collected glasses. She was just so heart-stoppingly...*kawaii!* She smiled as customers left, her petite frame tensing into a perfect bouncing smile. It was great when Yumi-chan smiled, tilting her head so her hair swayed in that oh-so-cute way.

Yumi glanced back with a curious expression on her face. Hideki felt his cheeks redden. "Checking me out, Sempai?" she teased.

"Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!" Hideki exclaimed, squeezing his eyes shut, as if that would somehow make up for it.

Yumi returned a warm, knowing smile. "It's OK. I know Sempai is too nice to think anything...bad." She strained to grab three or four full beer jugs. Of course he couldn't let her do that, so he ended up serving the customers himself. "Sempai is so thoughtful," remarked Yumi as he staggered toward the table with his arms full. "See? You really are nice."

Walking back home, Hideki pondered. Is that what the problem is? Am I too nice? But if not, is nice really enough? If I'm so nice, how

come I'm still alone? What was that saying? "Nice guys always finish last."

Hideki glanced around the crowds filing along the streets. So many pretty faces...and with all the cute persocoms it was even worse! No wonder people often fell in love with their persocoms. Prettiness was intoxicatingly addictive. A smile, big beaming eyes and a sweet scent made for a rapidly beating heart, glazed starry eyes and a blank mind leading to stuttering and babbling. "Hmmm," thought Hideki, "I guess that's why people think I'm weird." But a cute face always brought out the best in him—the chivalrous side of him that wanted to protect and care for someone. He thought of Shimizu-sensei and Miss Hibiya. They were older, but somehow he always wanted to look out for them. Then he thought of sweet little Yumi-chan. She liked him, right? It's not that any of them couldn't look after themselves. It just seemed that, well, anything he could do to help them would be a good thing. And it made them smile at him, which made him feel happy. Is that why he was so nice? People always think fondly of a nice guy. But when he thought of protecting a girl, a different guy came to mind: a strong guy, a tough guy who was good at baseball or soccer or something, someone with a lot of confidence. A nice guy is nice to have around. But is that the sort of person a girl can be with? Does a "nice guy" make you feel safe? Can he stand up for you and stand up to you? Can he challenge you, take control and be selfish enough to run away with you just to have you all for himself? Sure, a nice guy is nice, but isn't that...boring?

Hideki entered the courtyard of his apartment block. He picked up the broom propped against the doorframe and swept away the leaves that had scattered before the door. Miss Hibiya liked a tidy courtyard. It would save her the trouble of coming out here again tonight. She deserved the rest.

As he opened the main door he took one last look at the stars and the warm glow of the city beneath them. It reminded him of Chi's picture book. He wondered: Was there someone special just for him somewhere out there? Someone for whom nice was enough?

He climbed the stairs and opened the door to his room, bracing himself for Chi's oncoming leap.

Instead a warm, soft hug.

"Tadaima," he called.

"Welcome home Hideki," purred Chi, pressing her head gently against his shoulder.

"Hideki is nice."

Hideki smiled. Maybe nice could be enough.

FAN FICTION CHOBITS



▲ Chi from *Chobits*, Kirsten Bjork, Age 20



▲ Kaname from *Full Metal Panic!*, Lashaina Tahrebandi, Age 12, St. Clair Shores, Michigan



▲ *Sailor Moon*, Vanessa Gonzalez, Age 22

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ANIME ON CAMPUS

In most anime clubs, thoughts of watching anything that originated outside of Japan would result in some sort of swift response employing gallons of tar and pounds of feathers. This, however, is not the case for the Columbia University Anime Club, which has chosen to celebrate animation from all over the world, with a special focus on the Japanese type.

Why do this? It was originally done to allow the viewing of an American anime parody; however, current club president Ken Kiyota feels that since anime and anime clubs bring a certain stigma (we all know what he's talking about), showing other forms of good animation will bring more members to the club. Lucky for him it seems to be working.

Weekly club meetings are still centered on Japanese animation, with meetings every Thursday at 9pm. These meetings last two hours, and the 20-plus attendees usually watch three episodes of one series and two of another. This plan is sometimes altered when a new movie or animated short has generated excitement among the members. Meetings are free and open to everyone; however, non-students may have trouble getting into the building due to a key card entry system. Contact the president or a club member if you want to get in. Unfortunately, the university is strict about room use by clubs, so meetings run only during the school semester.

While the meetings are the central aspect of the club, the true meat lies in the special events. During the fall semester alone, there were three special showings held in the university's Lerner Cinema movie theater. The first two events focused on Japanese animation with showings of *X* and a Miyazaki double feature. The third event, however, was a marathon showing of *The Simpsons* Halloween specials on—you guessed it—Halloween. All of these events were well attended with people enjoying food and each others' company. At one of the events, members

filled out a survey about anime purchasing habits for a raffle associated with a local video store. More events are in the planning phases, such as drawing contests, more marathons and some social activities.

This club also has an interesting anime library. While on the small side compared to some other clubs, it is one of the only anime club libraries in the country to feature manga. The manga is available in both untranslated and English forms, along with several tapes and DVDs, for members of the club to borrow.

Columbia University is home to many hard-working students who find it difficult to tear away from their assignments to attend a club meeting; however, those who can will find a new club bursting with great ideas and fun times. Only five years old, Columbia University Anime Club has much to offer everyone with interest in animation.

—NICOLAS DUARTE

Name: Columbia University Anime Club
Web: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/anime>
Contact: Ken Kiyota (kk2017@columbia.edu)
Location: New York, NY
Anime Shown: Varied
Size: 20-30
Meetings: Thursdays from 9:00pm - 11:00pm during the school semester
Library: Yes
Sub or Dub: Both
Other: Manga library, features animation other than Japanese



▲ *Rurouni Kenshin*, Misty Schmitt, Age 22, Macon, Georgia



▲ Muraki from *Yami no Matsuei*, Cathy Faris, Age 23, Richmond, Virginia



▲ Sakura from *Card Captor Amy* aka *Sakura02*, Age 15, Grenada, Caribbean

CON REPORT

FANDOM IN AMERICA: CAMARADERIE IN CINCINNATI

Toward the end of last November an event occurred that had a little more emotion than any other con covered as part of *Fandom in America* in 2003. This was, of course, Sugoi Con, held in Covington, KY (directly across the river from downtown Cincinnati).

Sugoi Con may at first glance seem like your average smallish, Midwestern anime convention. But, further witness will reveal it for what it truly is—perhaps the warmest, friendliest and most personal convention of the year.



While in many ways typical with its panels, workshops and screening rooms (not to mention outstanding guests and a choice dealers room), things were greatly improved over previous years by the convention's new, larger and more plush location at the Cincinnati Marriott at Rivercenter.

One not-so-typical aspect of Sugoi Con is its cosplay competition. Instead of the usual parade of skits on stage, the contestants appear in a closed room before the judges and are appraised for craftsmanship, accuracy and other attributes. Meanwhile, fans collect in

the main events hall enjoying karaoke. Once the decisions are made, the winners are then announced to a very upbeat crowd.

The friendly and pleasant staff of Sugoi Con made every effort to put on a con that would entertain and impress—and succeeded in many ways. But perhaps their greatest achievement was the high level of warmth and friendliness.

In the Midwest, Sugoi Con was for most, if not all, the final convention of 2003. Bearing this in mind, it's easy to see why so many people found the most joy in simply visiting with friends they would not see again until Ohayocon 2004.

Sunday, as Sugoi Con came to an end, all over the hotel people could be seen hugging, saying goodbye to one another and making promises to keep in touch until they meet again. You have to wonder how much life will change for these fans before they join up again.

If you wanted to be critical, you could probably find an area or two where Sugoi Con could improve. But it's hard to justify messing with something so pure and kind. Better to let Sugoi Con continue on as it always has and simply enjoy it for what it is—one of the best displays of camaraderie on the anime convention circuit.

text & photos by GERRY POULOS



What's the best anime to curl up and watch on a cold wintry night?

"I prefer Miyazaki works, like *Nausicaa*, *Porco Rosso*, etc. Good classic stuff."

Nate Burk, Sugoi Con Conchair, 32, Norwood, OH

"If I want to cry, *Grave of the Fireflies*. But if I just want to do it, then *El Hazard* because *El Hazard* is the best."

Katie Vrugink, 21, Grand Rapids, MI

"*Hana Yori Dango*."

Tim Walsh, Sugoi Con Badge Lackey, 26, Cincinnati, OH

"*Full Metal Panic*."

Charles D Ahner, Sugoi Con Security Chief, 50, Hamilton, OH

"*Iczer-One*."

Tony Figueroa, 29, Cincinnati, OH

"Most any of Miyazaki's works."

Jeremy Hudson, Sugoi Con Industry Liaison, 27, Louisville, KY

"Anything derived from the genius of Rumiko Takahashi."

Nathan the Lesser, 34, Cincinnati, OH

"*Kimagure Orange Road* or *Tenchi Muyo*."

Jacob Zumbrennen, Sugoi Con Publications Troll, 28, Fairborn, OH

What one thing do you wish every anime convention had?

"A clone machine, so the Conchair could get to watch the anime he hasn't seen. There's just not enough time to do everything."

Nate Burk, Sugoi Con Conchair, 32, Norwood, OH

"Scott McNeil."

Taliesan Jaffe, Director, Script Writer, Voice Actor

"24-hour-a-day video rooms."

Jeremy Hudson, Sugoi Con Industry Liaison, 27, Louisville, KY

"Catgirl jello wrestling."

Charles D Ahner, Sugoi Con Security Chief, 50, Hamilton, OH

"Aerosol deodorant."

Tim Walsh, Sugoi Con Badge Lackey, 26, Cincinnati, OH

Anime's Funny Man **Satoru Akahori**

When you think of anime, particularly funny anime, one name is mentioned over and over—Satoru Akahori. With credits such as *Bakuretsu Hunters* ("Sorcerer Hunters"), *Saber Marionette J*, *Video Girl Ai*, *K.O. Beast* and the recent *Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi*, to name a few, Akahori is one of best known and beloved writers in anime. Almost anytime you see a sexy anime gal kicking butt and making wisecracks, Satoru Akahori is behind her.

Newtype USA (NTUSA): How did you get started as a writer?

Satoru Akahori (SA): When I graduated from university, a bunch of my friends and I talked about, "Oh wouldn't it be nice if we could make a movie." Nobody wanted to do the script writing, so I said I would like to do the script. That was the first time I did any type of writing meant for a large audience. Typical of many student projects, the movie idea never went anywhere, but regardless, I studied how to do script writing as a happy consequence of this.

In learning this process, I decided that this was something I wanted to do, and that led me to gain apprenticeship with a person that I considered to be a master. Under his tutelage, I became a script writer. His name is Takao Koyama (*Dragon Ball*, *Saint Seiya*, *Project A-ko*, *Urusei Yatsura*), and he is a writer and producer with Tatsunoko Productions.

NTUSA: Did you always want to be a writer?

SA: Originally, I wanted to be a manga author. I wanted to do all of the artwork and do all of the lines. I went through and drew all of the panels and the characters and such, and then I would

write in the word balloons. Then I realized that that was all I really wanted to do [laughing]. I supposed that I would be happier as a script writer than a manga author.

NTUSA: Tell us about *K.O. Beast*.

SA: That was a project that came into being based on a lot of the crew that participated in *NG Knight Lamune & 40* ("Knights of Ramune"). They all came on board with this project. So, unfortunately, as we tried to produce this show for television, we had a difficult time. There was considerable resistance, and we had to jump through some hoops to try to get it on the air.

With that in mind, it is very much a heartwarming feeling that something that we so struggled with is now in the United States. In fact, if the sales of *K.O. Beast* in America are good, we might be able to make a sequel.

NTUSA: There's a lot of comedy in your work. Do you see yourself as a funny person?

SA: For reasons I can't comprehend [big smile], people have associated me with comedies, with romantic comedies, and, shall we say, risqué material. While I will NOT deny that I write that material, truth be told, I would love to spend some time on manly acts of machismo...although you may find it hard to believe.

NTUSA: Like slashing samurai or giant robots?

SA: Yes! I would love to. I have actually written up plans for doing more hard-boiled samurai features and features that would have giant robots. But, for whatever reason, I can't seem to stop



◀ Satoru Akahori

myself from featuring lots of cute girls in these series, so it

always ends up being heavily lopsided—pun intended—in that direction.

NTUSA: What are some of the differences between humor in the US and in Japan?

SA: For whatever reason, slapstick comedy is very popular in Japan. But even more so, particularly with children, people really latch onto language, pun-based humor. So, I would argue that in my case it just seems to really work. Humor such as, "My name is Akahori. No—not Alcoholic," for example [laughing]. You know, puns. People used to call me "Akahori the Pun Maker." That's not to say that I don't like slapstick comedy. Of course, the US is where a lot of slapstick originated. But, at the same time I like situation comedies. Like where you would have a loser protagonist that really has no redeeming qualities, but for whatever reason a hoard of young girls is hopelessly in love with him and you keep thinking, "Why in the hell is this going on?"

NTUSA: Where do you draw inspiration for your comedy?

SA: Various sources have influenced me. Japan has many live-action comedic troupes that have never come over to the US. One such group is called the Drifters, a comedic band that was very prolific in the 1960s.

As for slapstick humor from the States, I think that the work that has influenced me the most is *Tom & Jerry*. Every Monday through Friday where I grew up, there were 30 minutes

of *Tom & Jerry* broadcast on television, and I watched religiously. For the six years that I was in elementary school, they would rerun that series to death. They would finish a run, and then start from the beginning and run it over and over again.

NTUSA: What are you working on right now?

SA: I'm working on the series *Mouse* for adults—not as in erotic, but a more sophisticated publication. That's something I'm preparing and writing the scripts for. When they actually broadcast this on TV in Japan, it was so risqué that they got into a lot of hot water. I'm also working on *Lime-iro Senkitan*. The DVD for it actually sold very well, but I got criticized for it being risqué and such again [snicker]. I'm also working on an adaptation of that as a novel in a more adult form as well. I'm also doing a small knockoff series that will be on the further adventures of *Sorcerer Hunters*.

This isn't something that has started yet, but in regards to novels, hopefully I'll be able to start working on another *Saber Marionette J* series. It will be a sequel to *Saber Marionette J*, and it will be called *Saber Marionette II*. It will be a small "I."

NTUSA: What do you think about the level of fandom in the US?

SA: It's wonderful. I'm really surprised and overwhelmed at the fact that so many Americans are supporting Japanese animation in such a dedicated and passionate way. I'll definitely keep in mind that my writing is enjoyed by many American as well as Japanese animation fans.

—GERRY POULOS



JAPAN NOW

The princess of the Valley of the Wind spins a legend

Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind Figurine Set



Approx. 116 minutes
On sale now in Japan from
Buna Vista Home Entertainment

Hayao Miyazaki won an Academy Award for the Best Animated Feature Film with *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* ("Spirited Away"), and now the movie that made his career has finally arrived on DVD in Japan. Miyazaki originally wrote *Nausicaa*, his second work following *Lupin the 3rd—The Castle of Cagliostro*, as a comic for *Gekkan Animage*

(published by Tokuma Shoten). Miyazaki was responsible for the concept, script, storyboard and direction of *Nausicaa*, his first original animated movie. Topcraft, the company that gave birth to Studio Ghibli, made the film in 1984, and it can be considered the starting point for Studio Ghibli.

The setting for *Nausicaa* is the future, a thousand years after the last great war destroyed civilization as we know it. Monstrous insects and the poisonous forest known as the Fukai dominate the world. As the story develops, the humans who live in harmony with the few remaining bits of unspoiled nature sharply contrast with the continuous aggression of the militant nation Torumekia. The young girl Nausicaa, who can communicate with the insects, steps forward to oppose Torumekia. The nation of Torumekia resurrects the forbidden weapon, the Kyoshinhei, and then goes so far as to use the huge Ohm insects as weapons.

Nausicaa is a must-see for many reasons. Like all of Miyazaki's works, the imagery is one of the high points, starting with the images of flight and extending to the dynamic action and the portrayal of the mysterious Fukai. The multitude of unique characters stands out, from the kind and courageous heroine Nausicaa to the creatures of the Fukai, and the questions *Nausicaa* raises about humanity and nature have a universal appeal even today.

Only 50,000 of the *Nausicaa* figurine sets were made, and all have been sold. The set included the



▲ The Ohm insects that guard the Fukai forest go on the rampage!

DVD, a cloth case with a "blue angel" design and as a special feature, a reissue of the ceramic Nausicaa figurine that was



▲ Nausicaa refuses to back down, even after her land is invaded by the powerful nation of Torumekia.

originally sold during the theatrical release. Director Miyazaki himself supervised the figurine reissue.

There will be two other DVD sets. The standard version will include an extra disc with special features like images of the storyboards linked to the film, audio commentary and a collection of trailers. The first limited edition copies will come in a special "blue angel" case as well. The limited edition pre-order collector's box set will include all of the special features and a Kyoshinhei version of the case, as well as a Nausicaa figurine, framed art from the battle against Torumekia and a realistic model of an Ohm insect.



A group of highly proficient people came together to form the staff of *Nausicaa*, including Kazuo Komatsubara as art production director, Mitsuki Nakamura as art director, and Yoshinori Kanada in key animation. Hideaki Anno worked as an animator and was in charge of the scene where the Kyoshinhei appear. The powerful images shouldn't be missed!



▲ Nausicaa's pet Teto was scared of her in the beginning, but he sensed her love of plants and animals and willingly became hers.



▲ This meeting changed Nausicaa's destiny.



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Based on the popular trading card series of the same name, this show comes after the TV series *Aquarian Age ~Sign for Evolution~*, which aired in Japan in 2002. Shortly after the four superpowers Arayashiki, WIZ-DOM, Darklore and E.G.O. jointly defeated the alien Eraser and saved Earth, a new enemy emerged! The Polestar Empire, ruled by the strongest Mind Breaker, has invaded Earth. Once again, Earth turns into a battlefield, and four girls representing the four superpowers will stand up against the Empire. This brand-new story forms a bridge between *Aquarian Age Saga I* and *Saga II*. The limited edition comes with the soundtrack CD, three premium card decks and a platinum pack. The standard version comes with only the CD.

STAFF director, character designer & animation director: FUMIE MOROI; series organization: KAZUHIKO SOMA; character concepts: HARUHIKO MIKIMOTO

CAST Mayumi Fujiwara: MAMIKO NOTO; Miharu Itsukushima: ATSUKO ENOMOTO; Yoko Ashley: KUMIKO YOKOTE; Stella Blavatsky: ROMI PARK; Hokuto: YUMI TOMA



▲ Mayumi Fujiwara fights the Polestar Empire that killed her friend.



▲ Four superpowers will cooperate to defeat the enemy.



▲ Hokuto shows up wherever the heroine goes.

CHECK IT OUT! Mayumi is a glasses-wearing high school student with psychic powers. Miharu is a Taoist priestess, Yoko is a vampire, and Stella is a sorcerer with eternal life. Each one is equally beautiful, and their action scenes are superb! Hokuto's true identity and purpose form the highlights of the drama.

The popular TV series is on DVD in Japan!

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On sale now in Japan from
GENEON ENTERTAINMENT

Since a severe childhood accident, Shiki Tono (voiced by Kenichi Suzuki) has possessed the ability to see people's death lines (the lines where lives can be cut). A mysterious woman gave him a pair of glasses to block his ability, and he's led an ordinary life ever since. But after his father dies, he returns to his parents' home and one day loses control and kills a woman. However, the woman he supposedly killed appears in front of him! She's the vampire Arcueid (voiced by Hitomi Nabatame) and is chasing a suspect in one of the mysterious murder cases in the city.

This is the anime version of the incredibly popular game.

The director is Katsushi Sakurabi of *Gunparade March* fame, and script and series organization were done by Hiroko Tokita. Volume 1 includes Episodes 1 and 2. The first pressing comes in a box designed by creator Takeshi Takeuchi (TYPE-MOON) that holds six volumes.



▲ Shiki is relieved that he cannot see death lines anymore.



▲ Arcueid was supposedly killed, but she appears in front of Shiki...

▼ Arcueid scolds Shiki for his bad table manners.



CHECK IT OUT! This horror show takes place in a beautiful and vicious world, and is filled with lovely characters from the heroine Arcueid to Shiki's sister Akha. They're all voiced by popular actresses such as Fumiko Urakawa, Yumi Kakazu, Kana Ueda and Akiko Kimura.

THIS MONTH'S SELECTIONS



Space Pirate Captain Herlock OUTSIDE LEGEND ~The Endless Odyssey~ 12th VOYAGE

On sale now in Japan from VAP

The final decisive battle has begun between Herlock and the Nu, who wish to conquer the universe.

However, the Arcadia's central computer is still down, and the ship gets in a terrible bind after an attack

by a large cylindrical weapon. Meanwhile, Irita sneaks into the Nu-operated *Fata Morgana*. This is the latest volume of the OVA series, which is nearing its climax!



Guardian Hearts 3

On sale now in Japan from Soft Garage

This is a burlesque sci-fi love comedy revolving around high school student Kazuya and five cute alien girls from space. This volume includes Episode 5, in which the characters freak out during preparations for the school festival, as well as Episode 6, where Hina and her friends receive a new assignment on the day they open a cosplay café. The first pressing comes in a clear box that can also hold the drama CDs from this volume and the first one, while the standard version includes only a postcard.



Macross Zero 3

On sale now in Japan from Bandai Visual

This is the third in the five-volume OVA prequel to *Chojiken Yosai Macross* ("Super Dimension Fortress Macross"). The story is set on Muvni Island, where an all-out battle between the UN Spacy and the Anti-UN rebels is taking place over the island's Protoculture ruins. Ace pilot Shin Kudo struggles to fight in the unarmored

miliar VF-0 variable fighter as the battle of the armored Valkyries heats up!

Faithfully re-creating the distinctive world of Kei Toume's original work

Hitsuji no Uta Volume 3



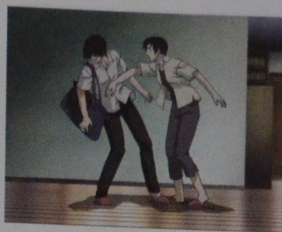
Approx. 30 minutes
+ special features
On sale now in Japan
from Ken Groove

Kazuna Takashiro (voiced by Tomokazu Seki) was born into a clan with a hideous hereditary disease—the need to suck human blood in order to survive. But he grew up not knowing it, and as a high school student, he traces his distant memories and arrives back at his old house, where he reunites with his older sister Chizuna (voiced by Megumi Hayashibara). Kazuna is perturbed at the need to sacrifice humans in order to stay alive. He breaks ties with his foster parents and friends, starts living with his sister and soon begins to experience severe convulsions. Chizuna, who already shows signs of the disease, donates her blood to Kazuna, and they try to accept their cruel fate together.

This is Volume 3 of Kei Toume's original work, which has been made into a live-action movie. This volume narrates the story's climax, where the relationship between brother and sister grows even stronger. It includes eight pages of liner notes and a large postcard with a new illustration by the creator.



Chizuna sees her father in the image of her beloved brother. Kazuna despises drinking blood and struggles to discover his reasons for living. The emotional swings of this sister and brother have been carefully depicted by veteran director Gisaburo Sugii.



▲ Kazuna's behavior angers his foster mother.



▲ Chizuna's disease slowly worsens.
▲ Kazuna's classmate feels uneasy.

The ordinary life of a talking dog

Go Forward



Approx. 120 minutes
On sale now in Japan from
Pony Canyon

The main character of this anime is the talking dog Mametaro, who has a complex about being a mutt. This heartwarming show depicts his owner Ikuko and her relationships with her boyfriend and other people in the city. The anime is based on the popular manga by Kira (running serially in Shueisha's *Chorus* magazine). Volume 1 contains four episodes. In Episode 1, Mametaro and Hanako cause big trouble at Ikuko's school. The DVD is packed with special features, including footage of recording sessions and commentaries from members of the voice cast, such as Hiroyuki Yoshino and Fumiko Orikasa, as well as Nakagawake, a comedian duo voice acting for the first time in this show.



Mametaro's girlfriend Hanako is a Kishu dog who loves melon bread. Sebastian is a male dog who looks like a female. These unique human and animal characters make this show appealing. The interaction between humans and their pets, who don't understand each other's language, is hilarious.



▲ Ikuko has a crush on Akiyoshi, and their relationship develops slowly.



▲ Ikuko is very kind to her dog Mametaro.



▲ Mametaro and Hanako in a comical scene



Spy Sorge

On sale now in Japan from Asmik Ace Entertainment

This historical drama from director Masahiro Shinoda graphically delves into a spy incident that occurred in early Showa era (circa 1930s) Japan, just as the country was poised for war. The film offers stunning visual depictions of events in pre-WWII Japan, such as the attempted

coup d'état in 1936 (known as "the 2/26 incident") and the Combined Fleet amassing in Hiroshima Bay in preparation for the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The historical figures are played by an excellent line-up of acting talent. Includes a bonus disc with "making-of" footage, cut scenes and an analysis booklet.



Azumi Deluxe Edition

On sale now in Japan from Shogakukan & Toshiba Entertainment

Some thought it would be impossible to turn Yu Koyama's samurai action comic into a film, but the daring young director Ryuhei Kitamura rose to the challenge. This film is remarkable for its new acting talent, starting with Aya Ueto, who plays the young female warrior

Azumi. It's certainly a sight to behold when Joe Odagiri is all made up as Azumi's enemy Bijomaru. His performance is eerily good. The Deluxe Edition is packed with special features, including interviews with staff and cast, "making-of" footage, a film journal, location reports from Sanyo Broadcasting, promotional trailers and more!



Ginga Tetsudo 999 Fumetsu no Kukankido 1

On sale now in Japan from avex

This Flash version broadcast on the Internet is a remake of the popular TV series that aired in Japan in 1978 and was later made into a few movies. Memorable scenes and familiar characters such as Maetel and Tetsuro, who seeks to obtain a mechanical body, come to life with new animation and sound. The first volume contains three episodes and an interview with Leiji Matsumoto, as well as an analysis booklet.

The popular game from Ohji Hiroi and Rumiko Takahashi is finally an anime! **Kido Shinsengumi Moeyo Ken Volume 1**



Approx. 30 minutes
+ special features
On sale now in Japan from
Marvelous Entertainment

In the 15th year of the Meiji era (1882), Kaishu Katsu asked Ryoma Sakamoto's widow Oryo to form a new division of the Kyoto Prefectural Police called the Kido Shinsengumi in order to protect Kyoto from subversive rebel activities and demon crimes. But the commander, Yuko Kondo, eats like a horse, is clumsy, overly sentimental and wasteful. The other members are equally colorful, squandering their time in love and swordplay. They're a source of much trouble for the citizens of Kyoto!

This anime is based on the PS2 game, whose story and character designs were done by the two popular hitmakers Ohji Hiroi and Rumiko Takahashi, respectively. It's an action-packed show about the daughters of feudal heroes like Ryoma Sakamoto and others from the end of the Edo period. The setting is slightly different from the game, and the story is original to the anime.

Although Volume 1 contains only the first episode, it comes with a figure of Kaoru Okita. Special features include non-credit opening and ending sequences that are longer than the ones on the rental videotape.

STAFF original story: OHJI HIROI; character design: RUMIKO TAKAHASHI; director: HIDEKI TONOKATSU; script: JUNKI TAKEGAMI

CAST Yuko Kondo: AI ORIKASA; Toshie Hijikata: NAOOKO MATSUI; Kaoru Okita: HARUNA IKEZAWA; Shintaro Yuzuki: KENJI NOJIMA; Ryunosuke Sakamoto: CHISA YOKOYAMA; Nekomaru: MAYUMI TANAKA; Oryo: RYOKO SAKAKIBARA



▲ Isami Kondo's daughter Yuko Kondo is the commander of the Shinsengumi, a special division of the Kyoto Prefectural Police.



▲ They're freaked out by the demons in Kyoto.



▲ The Shinsengumi members wear a suit of armor during combat.



The voice actors perfectly match the material, especially AI Orikasa's high-energy performance which is explosive from the very first episode. Shinsuke Miki, Takeshi Kusao and many more lend their voices to characters in this show.



Konjiki no Gash Bell!! Volume 1

On sale now in Japan from Pony Canyon

The mighty once-in-a-millennium struggle to determine the ruler of the demon world has begun. Kiyomaro has acquired a red demon book, and his partner the demon-child Gash Bell wants to be a benevolent demon king. Together they face an endless onslaught of fierce enemies! This volume contains the first two

episodes of the TV series based on the award-winning manga by Makoto Raiku. Don't miss Ikue Otani's endearing performance as the charming Gash!



Ikki Tousen Volume 1

On sale now in Japan from Media Factory

This show is about the intense fighting competition between select high school kids (centering on the ditzy heroine Hakufu Sonsaku, voiced by Masumi Asano). They have inherited the souls of famous heroes from the Chinese classic *Sanguozhi* ("Romance of Three Kingdoms"), and they battle each

other on campuses and in the streets to determine the best of the best. The first pressing includes Episode 1 of the series, as well as a special bonus disc containing loads of must-see extras. The extra footage includes a special **CLUB AT-X** broadcast feature, behind-the-scenes looks at character song recording sessions and the photographing of fight scenes used as reference materials.



Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu Volume 1

On sale now in Japan from Happinet Pictures

Unlike the previous *Full Metal Panic!* series which was based on Shoji Gatou's serious full-length novels, this new series is based on the lighthearted school comedy of his short stories. Four episodes come in this first volume, including two previously-unreleased episodes featuring Sosuke and

Kaname's familiar hijinks and shenanigans. The limited edition also comes with three different action figures and a "Captain's Log" CD where Teletha (voiced by Yukana) narrates the events of her typical day on board the *Tuatha De Danaan*.



Gakuen Senki Muryou DVD BOX

On sale now in Japan from King Records

All 26 episodes of NHK's schoolyard sci-fi anime hit directed by Tatsuo Sato come in this single box set. The story revolves around the search for the true nature of the main character Muryou Subaru (voiced by Issei Miyazaki). In addition to the six main discs in the collection, the box comes with a bonus disc featuring a special summary of the first half of the story, narrated by Nayuta (Romi Park).



Galaxy Angel AA Volumes 4-6

Limited Edition Special Pack

On sale now in Japan from Bandal Visual

This volume contains the latter half of the third season (Episodes 39-51) of *Galaxy Angel*. This gorgeous Special Pack edition contains all three discs that came with the standard edition, as well as a special drama CD and a special features disc containing eight music clips and an unaired episode.



R.O.D-The TV- disc.1

On sale now in Japan from Aniplex

Anita, Maggie and Michelle are three beautiful sisters in Hong Kong who use their paper-manipulating powers to solve difficult mysteries! The first volume of this all-new action show features Episodes 1 and 2 and comes with a special booklet. The first pressing also includes a bind-in pinup, as well as new card pinups illustrated by Taraku Uon.

Shojo manga selection
that's almost as big
as their eyes.

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or 9.99 each

Includes these titles:

- Snow Drop Vol.1 *Korea's favorite manga!*
- Ai Yori Aoshi Vol.1
- BTX Vol.1
- Kare Kano Vol.7
- Peach Girl: Change of Heart Vol.6
- Pita-Ten Vol.1
- A.I. Love You Vol.1 *Available Feb 3*
- Fruits Basket Vol.1 *Available Feb 10*

Offer valid February 2-February 29.



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Miniature mechanical mayhem!

Superior Defender Gundam Force Volume 1



Approx. 75 minutes
+ special features
Available February
2004 in the US from
Bandai Entertainment
7+

Neotopia—a city where robots and humans have learned to live together in peace and tranquility; where robots are brothers to humans, as opposed to servants or enemies. But the young boy named Shute is in for the surprise of a lifetime when he investigates a mysterious gate opening outside the city. There he meets Zapper Zaku, a representative of the extradimensional organization Dark Axis, dedicated to the takeover of Neotopia and the rest of the multiverse. Just when Shute thinks he's done for, he's saved by a stalwart red and blue robot named Captain Gundam, the top warrior of

the secret police force known as SDF. Soon enough, the Captain and his new friend Shute find themselves fighting together in the battle against Dark Axis!

Those who paid attention back in the day might recall that from the late '80s to the early '90s Japan saw a large number of releases under the *SD Gundam* name. Said releases ranged from manga to anime and even a line of video games based on our tiny mecha friends. *Superior Defender Gundam Force* is the latest in that line, and you might be in for a shock compared with what you're commonly used to from *Gundam*.

Superior Defender Gundam Force uses the cel-shaded 3-D animation popularized by video games like *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*. Overall, the anime

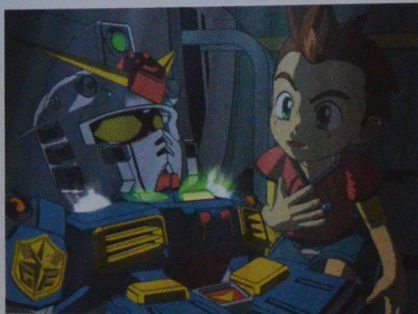
works fairly well in this format, but it shines when used for our tiny titan Gundams themselves. These guys are well animated, which really shows when they get to the job of whipping each other's metal rumps. Of course, some animation does get reused—which is a minor mark against it, along with the simplistic back-

grounds—though in all truth, this is probably more of a question of budget than anything else.

You may have already caught *Superior Defender Gundam Force* on Cartoon Network's Toonami block. It is important to realize that this series is aimed at kids. It doesn't take itself seriously at all; if you want to be entertained, don't expect too much from our small heroes. This aside, it comes recommended for folks interested in a light parody of the *Gundam* line and people that like easy laughs. All things considered, it's just clean and simple fun, filled with plenty of light humor and eye candy. Just keep reminding yourself that SD really only means what I said it means, and you'll do just fine.

—MACEO WARD III

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Time for some giggle therapy

Magical ☆ Shopping Arcade Abenobashi Volume 1



Approx. 100 minutes
+ special features
On sale now in the US
from ADV Films
17+

Sasshi and Arumi have been raised together in the Abenobashi Shopping Arcade. But the shopping arcade is dying a slow death, and people have begun to lose faith. Still, a few families have hung on for what seems like hope beyond hope. In fact, they seem to remain only to make sure that their signs, which aren't even visible from the street, remain in place. Arumi's family finally throws in the towel, making this her last summer with Sasshi, but things are about to take an unexpected turn.

When an old man accidentally breaks a pelican sign, the whole world seems to come undone, and Sasshi

and Arumi find themselves transported to a strange world where life is like a video game, and a well-endowed woman seems bent on killing Sasshi—over and over again.

All of Sasshi and Arumi's friends and family are there, but they've assumed bizarre roles. What exactly needs to be done and why is a mystery, but Sasshi and Arumi have plenty of time to figure it out as they bounce from world to world.

Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi has a storyline that reveals itself only in bits. What fills the space in between those bits, however, is hilarious. Not only does the show have a comic method all its own, but it also borrows from all styles and forms of comedy, both contemporary and classic. Non-comedic entertainment also gets parodied.

Spoofs abound of role-playing games, video games and television series such as *Evangelion* and *Dragon Ball*. Even feature films, like *Star Wars* and *Rocky*, aren't above the mockery. The lampoon and in-jokes are so numerous it's difficult to keep track of them all. Luckily for those driven to understand every nuance and innuendo, ADV has applied its Vid-Notes technology to *Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi*. In a style reminiscent of *Pop-Up Video*, you can choose to have little bubbles appear when the jokes start to flow so that you "get" them all. ADV has even tossed in some clever writing of its own.

The art and animation are well done and more than fitting for the story. Vibrant and smooth, it never takes itself too seriously, and changes style from one moment to the next. It seems the order of the day was to go with whatever would get the biggest laugh, and GAINAX pulled it off very well.

If you like anime and love to laugh, you should check out *Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi*. It's the perfect prescription for that much-needed giggle therapy.

—GERRY POULOS

© GAINAX / ABENOBASHI PROJECT



The cat is back

Nuku Nuku Dash Volume 1



Approx. 100 minutes
+ special features
On sale now in the US
from ADV Films
15+

While on his way home, young Ryunosuke sees the girl of his dreams. In fact, he is so smitten that he doesn't even notice her leap 15 feet in the air to rescue a kitten that has wandered into the road.

Once he gets home, however, he notices everything about her. Ryunosuke's father has brought her home, announcing that the poor, orphaned Nuku Nuku will be living with them. It seems like a teenage boy's dream come true, until it becomes obvious that there is nothing normal about his new infatuation—especially when he sees her in combat mode fighting her enemy.

Nuku Nuku's enemy turns out to be Ryunosuke's own mother, who has been assigned by Mishima Industries to capture an escaped MIFX-N2-009

Androbot with a cat's eco-brain and fifth-generation artificial intelligence (aka Nuku Nuku).

While at home, however, it's all happiness and hormones as Ryunosuke's mother doesn't recognize Nuku Nuku out of uniform—she's just happy to have extra help around the house—and Ryunosuke himself tries to win the heart of the innocent and alluring Nuku Nuku.



© Yuzo Takada / Project Banneko Dash

Like the original *Nuku Nuku* series and OVAs, *Nuku Nuku Dash* is just a bit weak in the storyline area. That, however, seems intentional. The attraction here is the action. This is essentially an action series enhanced by a back story instead of the other way around. Still, there's a little intrigue, a little romance, and some decent comedy, with an occasional bounce and jiggle thrown in for good measure.

The art and character designs for *Nuku Nuku Dash* are well done and do carry the story, but they seem to be slightly less than what today's fans have come to expect. Still, if you've got just a little old-school in your soul, you'll find them more than adequate. Likewise, the animation and music scores are nothing to rave about. Some may even find the traditional cel style a bit refreshing given anime releases of late. Similarly, the music has little to offer in the way of striking singles, but it is meant to enhance, not overwhelm, the series and does its part in moving the story along.

If you're an anime fan who likes the good old-fashioned way of designing and animating an action series, then *Nuku Nuku Dash* is definitely for you. So, let your old-school light shine and check it out—you won't be disappointed.

—GERRY POULOS



REVIEW

Someday's Dreamers: Magical Dreamer Volume 1



Approx. 100 minutes
+ special features
On sale now in
the US from
Geneon Entertainment
13+

It's 2:15pm. You're walking home from school with your best friend. Talking, having fun, not really paying too much attention to anything around you. You carefully balance on the nearby guardrail as you saunter down the street, seeing which one of you can stay up there the longest. You reach a street corner, and then, the unthinkable happens! Your friend loses his balance, slips and falls face first into the street just as an errant car (or maybe even one of those huge Segways) barrels its way through the intersection straight toward your friend!

Now, you're a mage. What's a mage?! Dang, you must have been slacking in class! But that's OK, since this is your cheat sheet. It means you have the power to make a miracle happen. You could easily save your friend's head from becoming just like the contents of an egg carton on

Halloween—except, you see, there are rules. People have to be consulted, forms filled out, papers signed, approvals granted—all before the use of special power is OK'ed and assigned to a mage. So what to do? Follow the rules and let your friend become a speed bump under Joe Averageman's overcompensation of a vehicle,

or break the rules and save him without permission?

This is exactly what Yume Kikuchi's struggling with. A country girl, she's come to the age where she must travel to Tokyo and work as an apprentice to hone her skills as a mage. She has to learn all about using her magic power without breaking the rules.

The mysteriously suave, supercool and androgynous Masami Oyamada is her teacher, and he just may end up teaching her a little more about life than she'd bargained for.

With unique character designs that hearken to the pages of *Yokohama Shopping Trip* and *Love Hina*, *Someday's Dreamers* is slow and interesting, and it's probably been overlooked by many because of this. It's actually an allegory about how you can live your life—right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood. In fact, watching this show would probably do high school students and other unsure people out there a great service in helping them figure out what they should do with themselves. So unless you're one of those people who already knows *everything* about life, you just may learn a little something from watching this show.

—BRADY HARTEL



REVIEW



© 2002 Norie YAMADA / KADOKAWA-DAIEI / PNDTK / TV Asahi

Kimagure Orange Road OVA/Movie Box Set



Approx. 270 minutes + special features
On sale now in the US from AnimEigo
13+

I admit that my firsthand knowledge of *Kimagure Orange Road* is pretty limited. With that in mind, obtaining a copy of AnimEigo's release of the *Kimagure Orange Road* OVA/Movie Box Set pretty much qualifies as my first real foray into this classic anime series. While I'm generally not too gung-ho about classic titles, I must confess that I was actually quite pleased with what I saw here. Rather than relying on dynamic visuals and excitement to win over the audience, *Kimagure Orange Road* captivates viewers with actual substance and superb storytelling ability. I see now why the series is such an enduring classic with anime fans.

Kimagure Orange Road is based on the extensive manga by Izumi Matsumoto, and follows the life of Kyosuke Kasuga, a relatively normal high school boy who just so happens to be cursed with psychic powers. Kyosuke finds himself embroiled in a love triangle with the bubbly Hikaru, who is absolutely infatuated with Kyosuke, and the beautiful Madoka, who seems fond of Kyosuke but would never admit to it as blatantly as Hikaru. Like most anime guys in this situation, Kyosuke just can't decide which one he truly loves more, and does his best to maintain a delicate balance between the two. Of course, with lecherous friends, nosy little sisters and various other eccentrics buzzing around, this is no easy task.

The first two discs in the collection feature a series of eight *Kimagure Orange Road* OVA episodes, which I presume are pretty reminiscent of how the TV series presents itself. The episodes prove to be quite entertaining, featuring everything from Kyosuke changing bodies with a goldfish, the family cat and an idol singer, to a skiing vacation gone horribly awry—pitting Madoka and Kyosuke against vengeful zombies and ghosts at the bottom of a mountain

cave. Also, if you haven't seen the television series, the OVA episodes offer a helpful glimpse of how Kyosuke's relationships with Hikaru and Madoka have evolved over time. These episodes undoubtedly serve as a nice addition to the events of the television series, and make for a good lead-in to the final chapter presented in this collection.

While the preceding OVA episodes were fairly enjoyable, the true breadwinner of this collection is undoubtedly the *Kimagure Orange Road* movie, *I Want to Return to That Day*. Billed as the bittersweet conclusion to the television series, this film forces Kyosuke to finally make his choice between Hikaru and Madoka. Whichever choice Kyosuke makes, someone is going to wind up devastated, and this movie does an exceptional job portraying the raw emotion the characters feel as the happy trio that endured for so long finally comes crashing down around them. One can't help but feel sorry for the loser of this endeavor, as she tries desperately to cling to what once was, only to find her efforts repelled at every corner. It was indeed a bittersweet ending.

Production values on *Kimagure Orange Road* are pretty reminiscent of other series that were popular at the time, such as *Ranma 1/2* or *Maison Ikkoku*. *Kimagure Orange Road*, like *Maison Ikkoku*, wins you over with its substance and storytelling abilities, rather than by relying on flashy visual dynamism. AnimEigo's release appears fairly solid, with the discs coming in a sturdy box that features some lovely cover artwork.

For those of you who are fans of the *Kimagure Orange Road* series, picking up a copy of the OVA/Movie Box Set is a no-brainer. If you're a fan of classic animation in general, such as Rumiko Takahashi's works, *Kimagure Orange Road* would definitely be a safe investment. If you don't fall into one of the aforementioned categories, well, it probably wouldn't hurt to try it out anyway. Because after screening this collection, even I just might be tempted to watch the television series.

—MARK CLARK

Graphic image provided courtesy of AnimEigo, Inc.
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Shark Skin Man and Peach Hip Girl

REVIEW



Approx. 108 minutes
+ special features
On sale now in the US
from Kino International
R

The expression "Tarantino-esque" gets thrown around too much for my taste. Guy Ritchie's movies, for example, are particularly susceptible to this label. However, applying the term to Japanese cinema is often inaccurate. I prefer the term "like Miike," in reference to Takashi Miike, the director of the *Dead or Alive* trilogy and *Ichii the Killer*. After all, Japanese yakuza films tend to be more over-the-top than their American analogs, largely personified in the style of Miike or Shinya Tsukamoto, director of *Tetsuo* ("Iron Man"). That said, Katsuhito Ishii's *Shark Skin Man and Peach Hip Girl* is distinctly Tarantino-esque.

Based on the Minetaro Mochizuki comic, it is a more subdued effort than fans of contemporary Japanese action films might be accustomed to. The story centers on the unlikely pairing of

Samehada (Tadanobu Asano), a yakuza thug who's unwisely made off with 100 million yen in gang money, and Toshiko (Sie Kohinata), a quiet young woman fleeing her creepy "uncle." The two join forces after an improbable initial encounter to flee their respective pursuers.

Hot on Samehada's heels are Boss Tanuki (Ittoku Kishibe) and his troupe of assassins, including the platinum blond Mitsuru (Shingo Tsurumi), who hunts by smell and balks at getting his leathers wet, and his sister Mitsuko (Kimie Shingyoji). In the meantime, Toshiko's uncle hires Yamada (Tatsuya Gashuin), the same nerdy, unbrowed hit-man who offed his wife,

to bring Toshiko back and do away with that pesky young man she's hooked up with. Yamada agrees, until he ends up in love with Samehada.

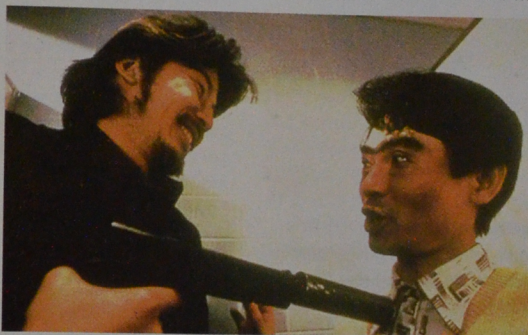
And so it goes. The spare plot in *Shark Skin Man* plays second fiddle to the amusing characters and the situations in which they find themselves. The assassins pursuing Samehada often pause to hold conversations bizarrely tangential to the task at hand, while Yamada really deserves a movie of his own. The scene where he tracks Samehada to a gas station men's room is priceless.

The character of Samehada is light years away from Asano's later turn as Kakiyama in *Ichii the Killer*, and Kohinata isn't given much to do except look pretty, though she swings a mean radio. Kishibe does an excellent slow burn as the toupee-sporting Tanuki, while Tsurumi heads up a competent supporting cast of odd killers-for-hire.

People quick to lob the "Tarantino rip-off" bomb should remember that Tarantino demonstrates how much he enjoys stealing from directors he admires.

Shark Skin Man and Peach Hip Girl may contain a few more non sequitur exchanges and improbable coincidences than I would've liked, but saying director Ishii stole these bits from Tarantino is like saying Tarantino stole everything he ever did from Ringo Lam and Howard Hawks. This isn't a perfect movie—far from it—but it's an interesting enough exercise in stylized filmmaking. If all art is theft, then *Shark Skin Man and Peach Hip Girl* is mostly enjoyable larceny.

—PETER VONDER HAAR



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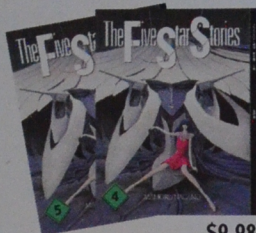
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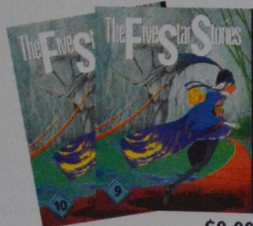
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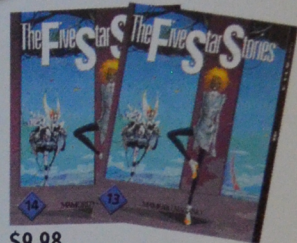
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Takashi Watanabe,
Editor-in-Chief of *Newtype* Magazine



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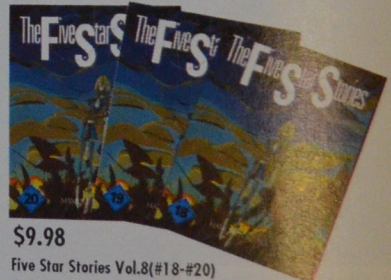
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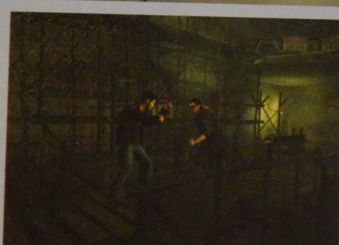
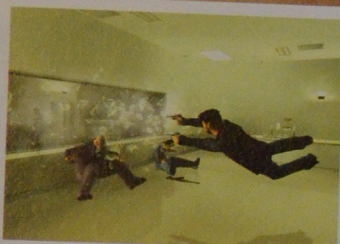
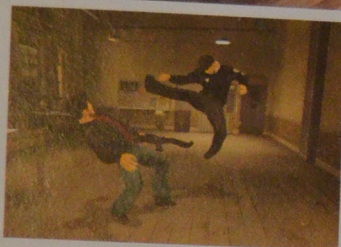
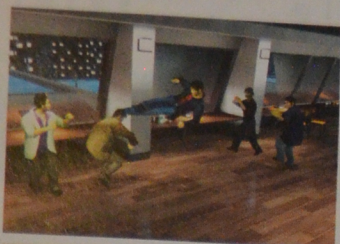
auto-targeting system seems to work extremely well, as does the combat interface, which uses only one button, and then merely as a trigger. While popping off single shots or bullet barrages is enjoyable thus far, we're a lot more stoked about the adrenaline boost feature, which allows for *Max Payne*-esque slow motion stunts. There's nothing quite like ripping into a pair of evil-twin bosses with body blows so speedy you can hardly follow them.

Currently, *Rise to Honor* comes off as more workhorse than show pony, with character models and environments that are merely competent. We suggest you try focusing less on individuals and more on environments—which include standard action-film fare like construction sites, kitchens and alleyways replete with props that promote acrobatic stunts. Anyone who has fond memories of the tea room scene in a certain John Woo classic or the temple fight in *Tai Chi Master* will be stoked. Simply put, nearly everything you'll encounter is interactive to some degree; chairs, tables and other items can be picked up, thrown or kicked at troublemakers. Factor in unrestricted 3-D movement and countless melee options and there's huge potential for epic brawls the likes of which few titles can match.

But don't expect much of a story. There's a basic plot, of course, which casts Li as Kit Yun, gainfully employed as a bodyguard to Triad boss Chiang. When the kingpin is finally gunned down in cold blood, Kit Yun must fulfill the dying man's wish to find and protect his daughter. In true globe-trotting fashion, the task will take our hero from Hong Kong to San Francisco and back. It's not Dostoyevsky...but it works just fine as a setup that justifies hours and hours of ass-kicking.

The demo levels we've experienced are far from complete, but they already establish *Rise to Honor* as a promising addition to Li's resume. With Miramax finally releasing the long-delayed silver-screen epic *Hero* some late winter/early spring, the star's profile will be high, and if his gaming appearance works as planned, the martial arts master may finally become a household name in America. We're hoping the thespian kicks in the door and backflips right into the nation's collective consciousness.

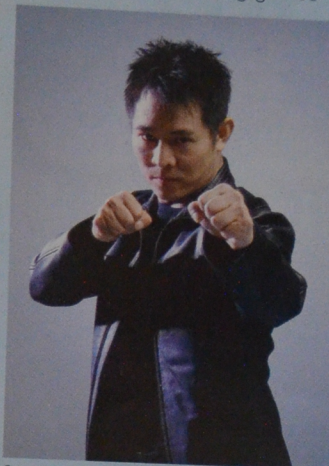
CHRIS ZIMMERMAN



 System: PS2
Available: Feb. 2004 in the US
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Rating: TBD

Rising to the Challenge

Kicking butt and making games—all in a day's work for Jet Li



Courtesy Sony Computer Entertainment America

Jet Li is no slacker. The former Wu Shu world champion began training at nine years old and became a coach and gold medalist, all before leaping headlong into the moviemaking business. With several cinematic gems under his belt, including *Kiss of the Dragon* and *Romeo Must Die*, the martial arts guru made the inevitable jump beyond the big screen.

Newtype USA (NTUSA): How does making a game like *Rise to Honor* differ from making a movie?

Jet Li (JL): In terms of the creative process of developing the story and idea behind a game, it is very similar to how a film is made. I think the biggest difference is probably in how the game is experienced by the audience—an active vs. passive role. With a movie, the degree to which an audience can be involved has a certain limit, but with a game such as *Rise to Honor*, players are able to not only experience the emotional ride the characters feel, but also feel as if they are the characters themselves.

NTUSA: What were you able to do within the context of this title that you couldn't do before?

JL: In the past, I've always had to be concerned with camera angles, lighting and other aspects of filmmaking. However, thanks to the wonders of computer technology, those things are not an issue while doing the movements themselves anymore. For *Rise to Honor*, I was able to focus much more on developing unique

movements, and not having to deal with issues like wardrobe, lighting and camera angles. It was a relief.

NTUSA: Was making a video game more challenging than a film?

JL: It wasn't necessarily more challenging than a movie at face value. However, the biggest challenge for me was in learning and adapting to the environment in which games are developed. Obviously, I was completely unfamiliar with it. You could say this was a very educational experience!

NTUSA: How many different martial arts forms or styles were you able to implement within the title?

JL: For *Rise to Honor*, we tried to utilize a wide variety of movements from many different types of fighting styles. However, most of the moves for my character are based on moves viewers would have seen me perform in many of the films I have currently in distribution. Those are the signature moves that the audience will be familiar with and identify. That's not to say we didn't attempt some new things as well...you'll have to wait and see for yourself.

NTUSA: Did you create any new maneuvers specific to the game?

JL: Cory Yuen, my good friend who helped with choreography on this project, worked with us to create some new and exciting movements for the title. In fact, we were definitely able to try out some different combat styles and techniques that we've never been able to achieve on film. Even I'm excited to view the end result!

NTUSA: How much did you participate in the game's development?

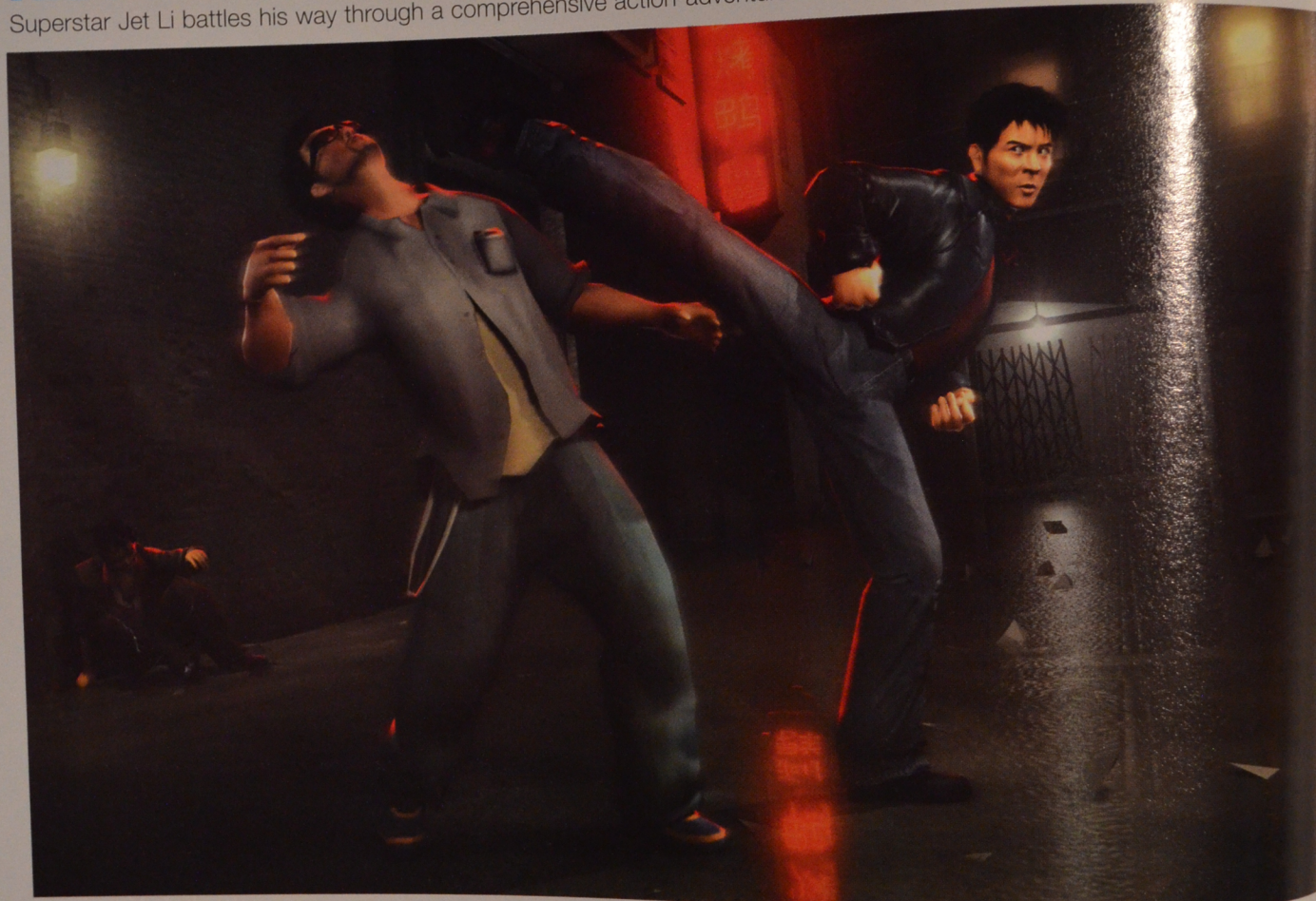
JL: I've been able to watch and play some of the earlier demonstration versions of *Rise to Honor*. While I did not partake in any formal testing, I did enjoy seeing the game progress through its different stages of development. And, of course, it is very strange and exciting to be playing a video game and see yourself on the screen! I've been involved in the development of the game in terms of the creative process from the very beginning, and it's been a great learning experience.

—CHRIS ZIMMERMAN

Hard boiled

Rise to Honor

Superstar Jet Li battles his way through a comprehensive action-adventure cut from the same cloth as Hong Kong cinema



We've seen movie-inspired martial arts games come and go; typically they're about as memorable as a 6am rerun of *Kung Fu Theater*. So when a company announces yet another **Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon** wannabe in the making, it's seldom cause for glee. Unless, that is, the title in question features the talents of actor Jet Li and acclaimed director Cory Yuen. Sheer star power isn't the only attribute that makes people sit up and take note of Sony's all-new action-adventure, *Rise to Honor*, though. Flush with multiple gameplay styles, it could be the first product to truly capture the violent magic of Hong Kong filmmaking.

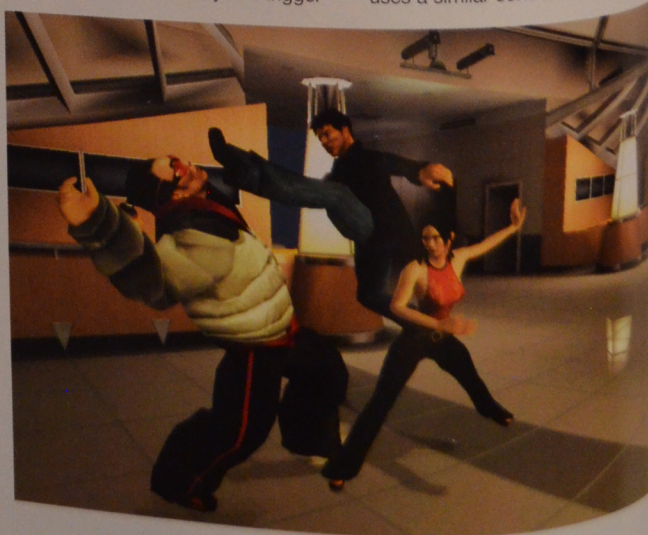
True, neither Li nor Yuen has worked on a game before, but the two have certainly worked *together*. Having collaborated on six occasions, including the *Fong Sai-Yuk* films and *New Legend of Shaolin*, the duo should make an ideal team in terms of fight

choreography. Amazingly, motion-capture sessions seem to have struck gold, as Li's digital double already kicks butt exactly as anyone familiar with his signature style would expect. Games often promise impeccable likenesses, yet seldom deliver; even at an early stage, Sony's baby seems as if it will make good on its word.

The action appears just as solid. The producers have implemented a groundbreaking control system that totally eschews buttons in favor of a purely analog joystick interface. In hopes of emulating fluid 360-degree movement, the title relies solely on the right analog stick as a means of performing unarmed strikes with lightning speed (the left stick handles movement). Basically, instead of pounding on the X button to initiate blows, you simply tap the right stick in the direction of an enemy to launch an attack. Each hit can be chained into a

rapid-fire combo—and you can just as easily focus on one villain as juggle a host of assailants coming from all directions. Furthermore, you'll trigger

completely different moves depending on where your enemies are standing. Gunplay is also a factor, and it uses a similar control scheme. The



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Taxidermy trouble

Dinosaur Hunting

It's not much of a secret that America loves hunting. If the hordes of orange-coated refugees littering the heartland every autumn aren't clue enough, just check the sales figures for any of the zillion *Deer Hunter* games. Metro3D's *Dinosaur Hunting*, an import originally developed by Microsoft's Japanese arm, borrows a conceit from author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, providing players with an Amazonian playground full of evolutionary misfits to stalk. Unfortunately for the creatures, but happily for audiences seeking excitement, it's a region in peril, and you've got to help capture the valuable beasts for transport to safer shores.

The campaign is broken into missions, each of which typically includes a primary target as well as targets of lower consideration. While you can pursue whatever prey you like and seize any opportunities that arise, ammo is limited. Each mission is timed, and though it's somewhat irritating to

suffer from such constraints, clock allotments are generous. Clues to each lizard's whereabouts are gleaned by overhearing radio chatter, investigating other parties' debris, and seeking out tracks and other telltale signs that reveal recent fighting or feeding. Although each area is large and requires occasionally tedious exploration, the pleasing but sometimes generic-feeling graphics and fabulous-looking dinosaurs do take the edge off. *Jurassic Park* this isn't, but it's surprisingly close.

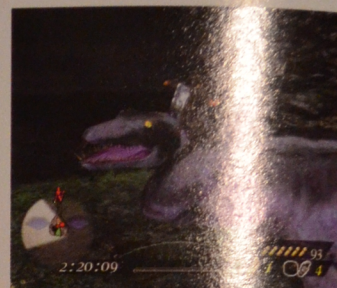
Since you're saving these big lizards, it's also worth noting that one should conserve shots to keep their hides more or less intact. Mind you, that's easier said than done since you must first find each species' weak point before safely taking the critters down. Alternately, you can study sleeping beasts or dino dung (it's huge!) to figure out how to formulate a knock-out compound. Development of a custom anesthesia is one of the more unique parts of the game, and is implemented

quite well. It's a shame supplies are so limited that you cannot simply chloroform the entire region and call it a day.

Combat works well, too. Firing quickly is a must against the small, fast carnivores, but you've got time to pick your shots against the lumbering beasts, and finding high ground always helps. Camera angles and slightly stiff controls can work against you, although armed with a pistol, shotgun and high-powered rifle, one can take down nearly anything. However, much of the fun comes from moving silently enough to skirt around innocent bystanders and observing packs of harmless vegetarians.

Despite a few nagging flaws like too much pattern-based movement for each target, the good news is this hunt nevertheless turns out to be (wait for it...) "dino-mite."

—RUSS FISCHER



SPECS
System: Xbox
Available: Feb. 2004 in the US
Publisher: Metro3D
Rating: T (Teen)

Anger management

Wrath Unleashed

Invariably, 2003 will go down in history as the year LucasArts reinvented itself. Releases such as *Armed and Dangerous* and *Gladius* saw a major shift in focus for the publisher, which went from a purveyor of pure licensed mediocrity to a production house with an eye for innovation. With the release of *Wrath Unleashed*, I can honestly say it looks as if the winning streak will continue well into the coming months. A unique hybrid of strategy and fighting games, *Wrath* is built on solid and deep tactical management, but isn't afraid to jump right into 3-D combat with shockingly successful results.

It's impossible to look at the title without remembering now-archaic computer classic *Archon*, a game of fantasy chess with wildly imaginative pieces that actively contested territorial rights in real-time. Here, four demigod Overlords, each aligned with a particular element, pursue a similar endeavor, as one to four players battle on 20 otherworldly backdrops for control of all-important Temples. The

upshot: Instead of using simple patterns, the layouts featured in *Wrath* are hexagonal, creating far more potential moves and resulting in complex strategic battles. Accordingly, the basic game is incredibly easy to pick up, but offers unexpected levels of subtlety because each unit is afforded specific capabilities based on its elemental alignment.

The action begins when you try to occupy a space held by a competitor. Instead of relying on behind-the-scenes dice rolls, *Wrath* launches into full-fledged 3-D battle mode, where adversaries are granted all the necessary fighting game attributes—a life bar, standard attacks, special moves—and told to duke it out for control of the region. In fairness, fights aren't on par with what current genre leaders like *Soul Calibur 2* offer, but are satisfying nonetheless, offering a good counterbalance to strategic options and giving the game character.

In terms of base presentation, *Wrath* is accomplished, presenting

stylish character designs as a way of breaking up what would otherwise be a generic-looking mythical game board. During melee match-ups, backgrounds are fairly basic, shifting depending upon the alignment of the controlling character. But associated creature designs based on legend and fantasy are incredible and the animations impressive, with monsters running the gamut from comical to threatening. Each beast has a distinct personality, and the relationships you'll see play out between what could have been nothing more than glorified chess pieces help the game establish a unique identity.

Wrath is no award-winner, but its compelling premise is a breath of fresh air in a sea of stale alternatives, and a fun alternative to garden-variety run 'n' gun fare at that.

—CHRIS ZIMMERMAN



SPECS
System: PS2, Xbox
Available: Feb. 2004 in the US
Publisher: LucasArts
Rating: T (Teen)

After surviving parts 1, 2 and 3 of the .hack saga, the end is in sight for Kite and friends. But the clock is ticking, the bracelet is gone and still the virus is raging. Player by player, The World is falling apart. Now they must cure this virus or watch their friends fade away — how will it end? It's up to you.

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THE SHINING GIRL AURA
WE WILL ENTRUST HER WITH OUR WILL
OUR FUTURE IS IN HER HANDS
SHE IS OUR

I MUST

SPEAK WITH MORGANNA

TO GO WHERE SHE IS

THE LIVING FLESH POSES A HINDRANCE

BUT I MUST

I MUST GO FOR OUR AURA

EMMA PLEASE GIVE ME A LITTLE

COURAGE

NO THE PASSAGE OF TIME

IS IRREVERSIBLE

BIRTH OR DEATH

NOW ONLY THESE TWO

CHOICES REMAIN

AURA THE CHILD OF LIGHT

EMMA'S DAUGHTER

MY DAUGHTER

JUST A LITTLE MORE

TRAVELER TAKE THIS TO HEART

IT IS DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN



Mature Sexual Themes
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Boxers or briefs?

Maximo vs. Army of Zin

Fight the forces of evil in your underwear. Hey, we're not making this one up.

As game publishers have matured, they've collectively realized an important fact: When inspiration isn't flowing, mining the past is a surefire path to success. Capcom recognized as much, retooling the coin-op classic *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* as *Maximo: Ghosts to Glory* in 2002, finding a large (and highly nostalgic) audience for the product, despite some design flaws. Bolstered by its achievements, the company in turn decided to rehash the remake, and the result is *Maximo vs. Army of Zin*, a fantastic platformer that succeeds due to stellar execution of a tried-and-true formula.

Opening with a battle that's as much *Army of Darkness* as *Lord of the Rings*, we see the Castle Hawkmoor defended by Lord Morgan from a titanic host of mechanical demons. Morgan seals the clockwork army into a vault, charging his lineage with guarding it at any cost. Fast forward 500 years: Morgan's family apparently has better things to do, as the mechanized monsters are now loose and chewing the scenery like rabid badgers.

Enter Maximo and his buddy Grim, a skeletal reaper who doubles as a sidekick. The pair quickly discovers the army is running on stolen souls compressed into gemstones. With these standard ingredients in place—charismatic lead, bumbling pal, folk in need of rescue, things to collect—the noble knight and his undead pal dash off for adventure.

Anyone who's ever played an arcade game will be right at home. The title simply involves running through well-crafted levels, destroying enemies and collecting souls. The massive stages feature numerous secrets, plus puzzles and planned encounters. Overall, *Zin* offers fast-paced fun, with lots of jumping and combat.

Multiple weapons, bonus items and combos only heighten the fun factor. Beyond standard sword swipes, you can also access a battle hammer and additional armor that includes magical boxers which increase defensive capabilities and shields that suck up nearby treasure. Accordingly, Maximo's enemies are livelier than ever, as pumpkin-headed scarecrows, ghostly baroqueers and even evil bunnies join the cast.

On top of simply tightening play mechanics and cranking up the atmospheric quality, the developers also fixed a number of problems present in the title's predecessor. For one, the excruciating difficulty level in the original *Maximo* has been toned down. Camera viewpoints have also been improved. The most pleasing addition, though, is the inclusion of frequent checkpoints, so you'll no longer spend tense minutes desperately seeking save points.

Other notable improvements were made as well. For instance, where the preceding game's graphics were passable but effective, *Army of Zin* is simply spectacular. Environments are far more detailed than ever before, with a huge increase in the complexity of set dressing. Leaves fly through the air on sorrowful gusts of wind, structures burst into flames when tension is needed, geometric angles warp your perceptions, and subtle lighting effects set a cleverly somber tone. Top such effects off with impressive character models, and Maximo and his enemies now sport outstanding texture quality and animation.

Complaints are pointless: The game is just *that* good. Although lacking in originality, the product has the kind of vision that would make Tim Burton cackle with morbid glee.

—RUSS FISCHER



System: PS2
Available: Now in the US
Publisher: Capcom
Rating: T (Teen)



Images courtesy of Capcom Entertainment, Inc.

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PREVIEW

Warrior woman Nightshade

Everyone loves ninja assassins. For today's youth, those elegant swords, pajama couture and superhuman martial arts abilities are irresistibly appealing. Coin-op legend *Shinobi* is undoubtedly responsible for promoting the trend, casting players as an adept killer who could maul scores of adversaries without pause. Sadly, thanks to a sadistic difficulty setting, the title wasn't quite so revered when it was revisited last year in an eponymous PS2 update. Luckily for fans, with series spin-off *Nightshade*, Sega is once again donning the killer's booties, albeit this time with a female lead and what we anticipate being a slightly more playable approach to the action.

The setting: Tokyo, 20 years after the events in *Shinobi*. The cursed sword Akujiki has been shattered, with the pieces now powering the city's defenses, repelling demons that threaten to invade. But some force has begun stealing the sword fragments, and famed female warrior Hibana has been charged with stopping

the theft before either the would-be conquerors or the thieves can hasten the metropolis' doom.

Sounds gloomy, right? Good thing our versatile heroine is more than capable of handling the issue.

Sporting a flashy red and white suit, this ruthless dame not only possesses all the powers of *Shinobi*'s Hotsuma, but also seemingly benefits from a revamped control scheme that could make slicing adversaries into sashimi a snap. Following a hands-on test, it seems like improvements over the original title are sweeping. Combat is deeper, thanks to a new pair of short swords for close attacks and fancy kick maneuvers that can deflect projectiles. The Tate combo system is also more workmanlike, as you can now chain together limitless kills before a smart cinematic shows victims falling to pieces in slow motion. We're counting on better wall-walking controls and smoother handling to make play more enjoyable for the end-user.

Not much seems to have been improved in terms of audio-visual

quality, but *Nightshade*'s characters look much more detailed and fluid than those encountered in *Shinobi*. Hibana's *Gatchaman*-style suit is cool, and her enemies are far more varied and impressive overall. The game also makes some effort to lose the streets and corridors that created a rut in its predecessor's aesthetic style. Opening with a bang on the flying wing of a stealth bomber, *Nightshade* is far more stylish and cyber-influenced than any ninja tale has a right to be, but the presentation really seems to work.

Given improvements, all that's left is for the development team to ease up on the monstrous challenge level that made *Shinobi* so notorious. With that taken care of, its successor could slice and dice the competition.

—RUSS FISCHER

System: PS2
Available: Feb. 2004 in the US
Publisher: Sega
Rating: M (Mature)



Images courtesy of SEGA

Space madness Lifeline

In the ceaseless quest to establish individuality in a field crowded with competitors, many games are happy to play the new-technology card. Seeing as USB headsets are now relatively common among American households, it was only a matter of time before some ambitious developer thought of using the devices for something beyond mere voice chat functionality. But Konami's *Lifeline* (known as *Operator's Side* in Japan) goes way beyond anything industry observers could have foretold. Rather than utilize standard controllers, the title actually relies on a microphone as its primary interface, letting chatty players converse with the lead character in what's quickly shaping up to be one of the year's most unique survival horror adventures.

As the affair begins, players find themselves stuck in the control room of an interstellar luxury hotel that's currently orbiting the earth. An attack from unknown assailants has disabled the satellite, killing many and leaving you stranded in the electronic nerve

center all alone. Fortunately, you're patched in via comlink to a woman named Rio, one of the few survivors, who's marooned deep within the installation. Using images piped in via the hotel's extensive security cameras, you've got to (no joke) talk Rio through the crippled corridors, ideally saving her and yourself while gathering information about the disaster.

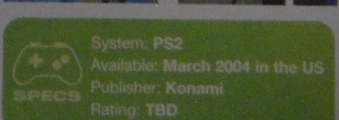
Relying so heavily on a brazen new control scheme could quickly derail most efforts, but *Lifeline* might just evade the crash and burn. Phenomenal support for voice recognition technology assures the program's familiarity with roughly 5,000 words and over 100,000 phrases. Speech processing isn't a new concept, so you can proceed with confidence, knowing there's some reliability—and flexibility in interpretation—as you verbally guide Rio through every situation. Combat should also be much easier than you'd expect, with numbers appearing over each enemy for identification, and stackable commands (i.e. "dodge and run and reload") that

keep the heroine from waiting while you ponder the appropriate phrase.

A quick peek at early code reveals *Lifeline* relies on the same aesthetic approach as *Resident Evil*. But observing environments through security cameras leads to some odd angles and very tense moments, with limited visibility a definite concern. Naturally, Konami has added nasty foes that should keep the proceedings lively, and the lighting is a nice mixture of clinical and atmospheric. Actress Kristen Miller (*She Spies*) will provide the voice of Rio, complementing a suitably unsettling musical score that frames the quest.

We're pleased as punch that there's finally a good reason to pick up a headset if you're not a *SOCOM* fan, and tickled pink there's actually a woman out there—even if she is virtual—who's willing to stomach some mindless banter.

—RUSS FISCHER

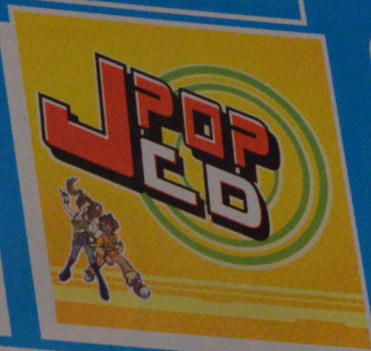


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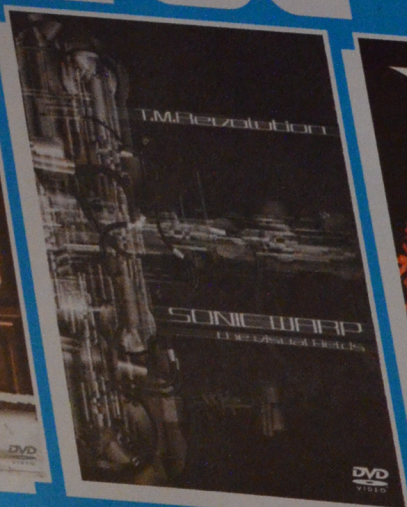
System: PS2
Available: March 2004 in the US
Publisher: Konami
Rating: TBD

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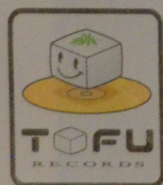
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designs were intended "to stimulate the boy in every man."

When the inevitable comparisons with previous releases came up, Matsuno noted that players have been introduced to *Final Fantasy* at different points. "Their views and backgrounds are different, so they'll prefer one [title] over the other. The definition of *Final Fantasy*...is difficult." How *Final Fantasy XII* will be received by gamers, he said, is up to them, but he's confident about the project. "I believe in myself."

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The imposing armored figure gracing the magazine's logo is a knight called the Order, who appeared in Matsuno's previous GBA title *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance*. "They were a special group protecting law and order, presiding the legal court and the peace force," Matsuno explained. "At this time, they are a group—the Knights of terror—that will come into contact [with Vaan and Ashe]."



First details of *Final Fantasy XII* revealed **Conflict in Ivalice**

Square Enix unveiled **Final Fantasy XII**, the latest installment of their landmark RPG series, at Virgin Cinemas in Roppongi Hills. The buzz was palpable at the press and industry event, thanks to a sizable crowd of lucky fans—winners of special passes—trailing up the steps to the cinema's glass façade prior to the event.

The throng of eager fans put president Yoichi Wada in a sentimental mood, as he reminisced about his own **Final Fantasy** fan days—how he called friends in the early hours for advice, or the panic he felt when he accidentally erased some of his saved data files. Later, in a congratulatory video message about the forthcoming game, Sony Computer Entertainment president Ken Kutaragi reflected on the franchise's impact on the PlayStation platforms, beginning half a decade ago with **Final Fantasy VII** on PS1 and continuing with the recent release of the online **Final Fantasy XI** on PS2.

Due for a Japanese release in summer 2004, **FFXII** is being created by Square Enix's Product Development Division 4, with producer/director Yasumi Matsuno at the helm. **Final Fantasy X** and **FFX-2** producer Yoshinori Kitase, of Product Development Division 1, spoke via a video message of the productive rivalry and different working methods between the two teams. Matsuno's division, he suggested, focuses on the finer details that make a perfect game. Hironobu Sakaguchi, the father of **Final Fantasy**, stressed the importance of change with each subsequent release and praised Matsuno's previous work, singling out **Ogre Battle** for its unique atmosphere and intricately woven narrative tapestry.

Final Fantasy XII is set in the war-torn world of Ivalice, in which the Arcadia and Rozaria Empires are locked in battle. Regarding the main characters, Matsuno explained that

Vaan is from the Dalmaska Kingdom, which is occupied by the Arcadia Empire. Having lost his parents in battle, Vaan aspires to become a pirate of the skies, to one day commandeer his own airship and leave the city. Princess Ashe is the surviving heir to the Dalmaska throne after its takeover. To liberate the kingdom from the Empire, she joins the resistance forces and encounters Vaan.

The Mediterranean Sea region served as a motif for the title's teaser image illustration, and the orange hues of the towering buildings represent the earth. Asked to convey a sprawling metropolis, background art director Isamu Kamikokuryou said that a trip to Turkey was essential for the team, which wanted to conduct research on ethnicity, nature and architecture. "There was something I couldn't achieve in **Final Fantasy Tactics Advance** that I wanted to do," Matsuno confessed. For eight years, he had wanted to incorporate different levels of social structure into a game. He was finally able to express this in **FFXII**, even among the moogles, a series' stalwart. "They have a different design every time," Matsuno stated, adding that while he felt the first design submitted for **FFXII** was a little scary, it looked cute by the tenth revision.

Character designer Akihiko Yoshida talked about the focus on

real time graphics in this installment, as opposed to full-blown CG movies (though the latter will still be featured in the game). "To depict skin textures

and muscles, we had to go back and forth between the artwork and [3-D] models," he remarked of the challenges. The characters' polygon

count was initially to be the same as **FFX's**, but due to restrictions they had only half the amount to work with. Still, the real-time model samples shown on the cinema screen didn't look that much different from previous games, and we were assured the quality will increase as the development moves ahead.

Matsuno hinted at a few new features of the game, one of them being a first-person view alongside the traditional third-person camera. The music will also see some change. "After **FFVIII**, the song portion became very important in the **Final Fantasy** series," Matsuno explained. Aside from a new ending song, Matsuno hinted at "something else. We can't say much, but it's beyond 'just a song.'"

Amidst the footage shown were stunning CG clips of armored chocobo knights engaged in fierce battle and a convoy of airships landing in a grand city parade. The exotic airships gracing the image art resembled gigantic flying fish. The grandiose



The fans lined up for a first peek at **Final Fantasy XII**. All the bigwigs from Square Enix—including the father of **Final Fantasy**, Hironobu Sakaguchi—showed up to showcase the latest title in their marquee franchise.

This song will show you all the various "colors" of ZONE! New single "Boku no Tegami"

The unstoppable ZONE successfully finished their second nationwide concert tour in Japan! Their heartrending new ballad "Boku no Tegami" was recorded right after the end of the tour.

MAIKO: This song came naturally to me. I remembered the chorus after listening to the song only once. I think it represents ZONE. It was easy for me to feel while we sang because the lyrics seem to talk about my life.

MIYU: I thought the lyrics were honest. I understand the main character's feeling of being unable to put her feelings into words. I felt some parts of the lyrics overlapped with my life, too. I like the part that goes "Kaerimichi no..." ["on the way home..."].

MIZUHO: I like the part that goes "fushigi dane, tsuki ga..." ["isn't it strange, the moon..."]. You know, there's the moon, but if you're looking at it by yourself, you may not feel anything special. But if you look at it with somebody else, the same moon can look different. So I felt I really understood [the message of] the song. When I recorded it, I made sure to sing differently depending on the dynamics of the song.

TAKAYO: When I listened to the song, I imagined a sunset. This is a touching song, so at the recording I dimmed the lights to set the mood [laughs]. I sang the chorus emotionally and powerfully.

As the title indicates, the keyword of the new song is "letter" (*tegami* in Japanese). It's a heartrending tale of a girl who can't give the letter she expressed her feelings in to the person she likes so much.

MIYU: Now e-mail is more common than letters, but I prefer letters and often write people. Letters from fans and my mother are my prize possessions.

Also on the single is the theme song for the anime *Astro Boy—Tetsuwan Atom*. It's a ballad version of the title song "Tetsuwan Atom." The song "mind"—used for a commercial in their home of Hokkaido—is also included on the CD.

MIZUHO: Since I'm better at singing powerful songs, I had a hard time singing the one for *Astro Boy—Tetsuwan Atom*. I tried to sing calmly [laughs].

MAIKO: If you listen to "mind," you'll wonder if there's really anybody with that much positive energy [laughs]! The song will cheer you up.

Released simultaneously with their single, ZONE's first DVD mainly contains promotional footage.

TAKAYO: You'll enjoy seeing how much we've changed these past three years. We were surprised by how different we are now, and the DVD made us laugh a lot. The scenes of Okinawa inside "true blue" are very cool, so don't miss them!

MIYU: The song "Sekai no Hon no Katasumi kara" from our latest tour is also included on the DVD. This is footage from our first concert tour, so I want fans that couldn't make it to a con-

cert to watch it, and fans who came to the concert should watch it, too!

(Editor's note: TAKAYO recently departed ZONE to pursue other dreams. The group plans to continue.)

Boku no Tegami



ZONE
Sony Records / SRCL-5701
On sale now in Japan
The CD includes the pure and heartrending love song "Boku no Tegami," the slow and relaxing "Tetsuwan Atom" and the pop dance tune "mind." ZONE's first DVD **ZONE CLIPS 01 - Sunny Side-** is also on sale in Japan.

text by NAOKO KAWASAKI



▲ Profile (left to right): MIZUHO (born December 12, 1986), MIYU (May 20, 1988), TAKAYO (June 13, 1985) and MAIKO (July 24, 1986)

shot by SHIGERU NOGAMI text by NAOKO KAWASAKI



▲ Profile (left to right): AYANO (born May 24, 1988), AYAKA (Feb. 9, 1988), MARIYA (March 2, 1988) and SAYA (July 23, 1988). KING debuted in January of 2003.

A lively and positive song that represents the hearts of teenagers!

KING's new single, "STARS-you don't have to worry about tomorrow-"

The average age of the energetic dance and vocal group KING is 15! They have just released their fourth single, the positive and catchy pop tune "STARS," which is the ending theme to the TV anime *Konjiki no Gash Bell!!!*.

AYANO: Our last song was a rap-heavy hip-hop song, but this one is a pop tune focused on singing. When I first listened to this new song, I thought it seemed refreshing. We've never done a song like this before.

AYAKA: I was the vocalist on this one, so I put some effort into my vocal technique, doing things like stretching out the endings.

MARIYA: I did the chorus, harmonizing with AYAKA. It was harder than I thought!

SAYA: Our dance is so cool, too. This time, the four of us often do the same dance moves. Our promotional video is full of dancing! And the storyline is like *Ghostbusters*. Don't miss it.

At the recording session, they most looked forward to lunch. As soon as one of the staff members said, "Time for lunch!" their eyes started twinkling! They

have more enthusiasm for recording after lunch, they say with a laugh.

The lyrics were written by the group. Each member was given a theme like "dreams" or "friends." Then all of their lyrics were combined into the song.

MARIYA: The line "proof of being able to live with sorrow" popped up in my head during math class, so I jotted it down on the edge of my notebook [laughs].

AYANO: I wanted to make the lyrics express feelings of people my age, including myself. This song will absolutely cheer you up!

KING's dream is to perform in dome venues across Japan. Their eyes burn with strength and passion!

STARS-you don't have to worry about tomorrow-



KING
Pony Canyon / PCCA-70054
On sale now in Japan
This upbeat pop melody sticks in your head. AYAKA's husky voice is utilized to the fullest. The lyrics KING wrote were based on the anime itself, and are full of the power and energy to move forward.

Bokura no Message

Kiroro

Victor Entertainment / VICL-35591
On sale now in Japan

This is the opening theme for the TV anime **Mujin Wakusei Survive** ("Survival—No Man's Planet"), for which Hisashi Eguchi did character conception. The simple lyrics and melody purify and enhance the show's theme. Don't forget to check out the ending theme, "Sunny Side Hill," sung by ROUND TABLE featuring Nino.



Ginga Tetsudo wa Harukanari

Isao Sasaki

Columbia Music Entertainment / COCC-15592
On sale now in Japan

This is the opening theme for the new anime **Ginga Tetsudo Monogatari**, which celebrates Leiji Matsumoto's 50th year as an artist. It's sung by Isao Sasaki, a veteran singer with deep ties to Matsumoto's works. He became famous singing theme songs for **Ginga Tetsudo 999** ("Galaxy Express 999") and **Uchu Senkan Yamato** ("Space Battleship Yamato"). Sasaki also sings the powerful yet melancholy ending theme "Ginga no Hikari."



Dive in the Sky

Mikio Sakai

Victor Entertainment / VICL-35586
On sale now in Japan

The theme song for the anime **PLANETES** (originally created by Makoto Yukimura) is the latest single from Mikio Sakai, known for "Drastic my soul," the ending theme of **s-CRY-ed**. His impressive vocals are main attractions of both "Dive in the Sky" and "Wonderful Life," the **PLANETES** ending theme that's included on the CD. The soundtrack for **s-CRY-ed** (music by Kotaro Nakagawa) is also on sale in Japan.



Shinkon Gattai Godannar!!

Akira Kushida

Columbia Music Entertainment / COCC-15593
On sale now in Japan

This is the theme song for the popular robot anime now airing in Japan. The sound of the horns at the beginning will pump you up! Chumei Watanabe composed and arranged it, and his unique sound combines with powerful vocals to produce the ultimate in music! This CD also includes the ballad "Zango no Hitsugi" (sung by Mitsuko Horie and Ichiro Mizuki), the ending theme for the same anime. The result is an unbeatably dynamic single!



HIGH CRIME

Daisuke Kawaguchi

Sony Music Associated Records / AICL-1495
On sale now in Japan

Master songwriter Daisuke Kawaguchi recently released this CD, his third single. He has created many hit songs, including CHEMISTRY's "Kimi o Sagashiteta" and Mika Nakashima's "STARS." He also worked on the sound-track for the TV drama series **Hitonatsu no Papa e** (starring Aya Ueto). His sexy voice on "HIGH CRIME" (the opening theme for the suspenseful TV series **Kyohansha**) has attracted many fans. The maxi-single contains four songs, including "Hoshi no Iki."



GADGUARD Original Soundtrack

Music: Kohei Tanaka & Kazuhiko Sawaguchi

Media Factory / JMCZ-1658
On sale now in Japan

GADGUARD is currently being rebroadcast in Japan, and this is a collection of background music from the popular sci-fi action anime that aired in Japan in 2003. Since the DVD releases, fans of the anime have really been looking forward to this CD. The music ranges from hard-boiled jazz to brisk action tunes, so you're never sure what will come up next. This album contains 37 songs.



NEGAJ

Makiyo

TOSHIBA EMI / TOCT-4643
On sale now in Japan

Scouted in Taiwan when she was 14, this singer has been appearing in commercials, TV dramas and variety shows ever since. The popular Makiyo has already released three CDs outside of Japan, but she finally debuted in her home country of Japan with the sensational "Sign of Wish." Makiyo wrote the lyrics to "NEGAJ," her second single in Japan. It's used in a TV commercial (in which she also stars) for the PS2 game **Super Robot Taisen Scramble Commander**.



WORLD TRAVEL

-See the world by train-

Various Artists

Universal Music / UICZ-1096
On sale now in Japan

The popular TV show **Sekai no Shaso kara** has been airing in Japan for an astounding 16 years, and this is a selection of the best background music from it. Besides the well-known theme song composed by Hajime Mizoguchi, this album showcases artists from all over the world, including Nana Mouskouri, Jane Birkin, Eric Clapton, Björk, Salif Keita and Faye Wong. It's like a world music fair packed into one CD!



confusion SORROW

Universal Music / UPOCH-1298
On sale now in Japan

This is the second album from the four members of **SORROW**. Kaori Kawamura, center of the tough band, has displayed many talents as model, actress, DJ and producer of her own brand of clothing and accessories. They released their debut indie album two years ago, but **confusion** is their first major-label album, so you can be sure they put a lot of energy into it. Their first DVD (of their spring '03 live tour) is also on sale.



Koi no Maho

ICHIKO

SCITRON DIGITAL CONTENTS / SCDC-00311
On sale now in Japan

In addition to being the theme song for the TV anime **Maburaho**, this is also ICHIKO's solo debut. Until now, ICHIKO has collaborated with other artists and sung backup at recording sessions and concerts. "Koi no Maho" matches her exquisite vocals to a driving beat. Make sure to check out how she changes direction to sing the delicate and evocative "We'll get there someday," the ending theme for **Maburaho**.



Aimai Seikatsu Kojo Keikaku

Kazuo Yoda

Applause / APPL-001
On sale now in Japan

This is Kazuo Yoda's first album. His music has been used in the **Tokimeki Memorial** games and in anime such as **Gekijoban Card Captor Sakura**, **X** and **Chobits**, and also on the albums of voice actresses Akiko Nakagawa, Sakura Tange and Rie Tanaka. This 14-song collection is packed with friendly pop sound and focuses on love songs about everyday life.



LOVE & PEACE ~40 Smokin' Reggae Hits

Various Artists

Warner Music Japan / WPCR-11726-7
On sale now in Japan

Reggae seems to have established its popularity in Japan, and this is a compilation of hit songs from the masters. This gorgeous two-disc album contains 40 songs from a wide range of talented artists, including Bob Marley, Maxi Priest, Third World, Inner Circle, Diana King, 10cc, Big Mountain and Simply Red. Enjoy this non-stop collection that really sets the mood!



This new song tells us all to take a step forward!

The Ai Yori Aoshi ~Enishi~ ending theme "I Do!" is sung by the Indigo

As they did for the first show in the series, the Indigo once again performed the ending theme for **Ai Yori Aoshi ~Enishi~**. The new song "I Do!" was written while they made their latest album **GLIDER**.

Ichikawa: This single ended up seeming like it was taken from the album. And in fact, the album contains some other songs that had been considered for the anime.

This song is quite different from the image of the main character Aoi, who dresses and acts in traditional Japanese style. The song brings you something fresh and stimulating.

Ichikawa: For the sound, we already knew that our priority was putting in what we wanted to express in the song. So that meant mixing what we've been doing so far with new things. The result was this song.

▲ Profile: Yuichi Ichikawa (left) and Miki Taoka (right). Formed in 1998, the Indigo debuted in May of 2000 with "BLUE." Their fourth album **GLIDER** went on sale in Japan last September.

Taoka: I heard that the song was supposed to be about the two main characters taking a step forward together, so I wrote lyrics to match that image. For a long time I've been thinking about writing a song about a strong-willed girl, and I decided to write one based around a theme that had been brewing inside me.

This song sheds some light on the path of their future development as a group. Be sure to listen to their new album, too!

I Do!



the Indigo

GENEON ENTERTAINMENT / PICZ-0027

On sale now in Japan

Just listening to the song will lighten your mood. The airy Latin arrangement is refreshing. "I Do!" contrasts with the calmer song "presence," also on the single.



shot by SHIGERU NOGAMI text by AKIRA ENDO

Inon Zur: Scoring Anime and Game Staples Stateside



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Anime hits America in varied ways. Sometimes it gets a makeover to suit the US audience, and other times a literal treatment is in order. Often in its transfer to US broadcast TV, music gets special consideration. Questions inevitably arise for producers. What type of music might a US composer create to convey the essence of an original work while capturing the attention of the American audience? Inon Zur is an award-winning composer who's tackled such concerns, having worked on various anime, US TV programs, feature films and video games. *Newtype USA* readers will likely recognize his work from the soundtracks of the American TV versions of both *Vision of Escaflowne* and *Digimon*. Certain video game properties may also ring a bell—like *SOCOM II: U.S. Navy Seals* or the highly anticipated *Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest* (scheduled for a spring 2004 release). These represent a mere fraction of Zur's larger portfolio, which has garnered industry accolades. In 2003, for example, he was nominated for the Game Audio Network Guild's Music of the Year award for his efforts on 2002's *Icwind Dale II*.

Taking time out from his work at his LA-based studio to talk to *Newtype USA*, Zur reveals an intelligent perspective on his past endeavors in the anime and game worlds—with a particular understanding of the many issues and challenges the anime community faces.

In his work on the *Vision of Escaflowne* TV series, Zur first planned with American producers and the director to determine the desired style of music. Despite initial differences, all parties eventually

agreed that the music needed to seem decidedly Eastern, with a mystical flare. Partly through the incorporation of traditional Japanese instruments, the result appealed to the dark, epic and magical nature of the story as well as to those elements that may be deemed exotic to the American audience. Zur expressed that he felt the anime was "a complicated story about human relationships...dark...scary" and that it was largely "misconceptualized" in terms of the marketing to a younger TV audience. Indeed this is a hurdle the anime community has historically faced in America, not just on *Escaflowne* but in efforts to gain mass acceptance.

The composer's work on *Digimon* didn't face the same public challenges. *Digimon*, the cash cow pushed forward and readily accepted in the post-*Pokémon* rush of the '90s, is still airing in the US, clearly aimed at children. Along with this, Zur has worked on the third through sixth seasons of the *Power Rangers* for ABC, focusing on pop-rock and orchestral scores, not to mention the score for the 1997 motion picture *Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie*. Clearly no stranger to works that cross the Pacific, his endeavors in video games seem a natural fit.

When asked about the differences in composing for video games versus anime, he says, "When composing for anime or a film, you are adding an element to complement or further the narrative. In games, one isn't locked to a particular image...it gets as interactive as possible...From a composer's point of view this offers more freedom."

With a host of creative projects in the works in various mediums and a substantial list of accrued

awards and nominations, Inon Zur seems as likely a candidate for composer on a new Hollywood film or hot PlayStation title as he does for the next big anime on US TV. For more information on the composer and his works, visit www.inonzur.com.

—JUSTIN KOVALSKY



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Energion: The Robots in Disguise Transform Again

All long-lived toy lines go through changes. Perhaps this constant metamorphosis fits no line better than *The Transformers*. Since the early '80s, they've run from their original forms to *Generation 2*, from *Beast Wars* to *Armada*. Now, the denizens of Cybertron are poised to take another giant leap forward. **Transformers: Energion** will usher our favorite clan—destine robots into a new world of comics, TV and, of course, toys.

The premise of **Energion** (*Super-Link* in Japan) is based on elements from different eras of *Transformers* continuity; it's ten years after *Armada*, and the long-standing conflict rages on. Energion continues to power the characters—it's their glowing lifeblood. The wicked Decepticons have made a devil's bargain with Unicron, the monstrosity huge planet-devouring Transformer. He's converted his new allies into different forms as a trade-off to gain enough energon to reactivate himself at full power. The desperate Autobots empower a squad with the "Spark of Combination" to try to save Earth. Naturally, this means more new toys.

The first of the new **Energion** characters are already hitting the stores. The actual series will launch on Cartoon Network in February, inaugurating a 52-episode run. The story will also be furthered in the pages of Dreamwave's wildly popular comics.

In terms of the figures, you will see some standard sizes as well as Minis in the first wave. The initial launch includes new blood and old favorites. Basic wave one figures will include clear parts that fit together into weapons that can be used in conjunction with other figures. These figures include Strongarm (an off-road Jeep), Battle Ravage (everybody's favorite cougar) and a Skyblast jet. Deluxe figures, which can be assembled into Powerlinx combos, include characters like fire engine Inferno and sports car Hot Shot. The Mega Waves boast electronic sounds and count fan-favorite Ironhide among their number. Future expansion waves include the likes of Jetfire and everybody's favorite schemer with a familiar voice, Starscream.

From there, they just get bigger. There's an Ultra Wave with a triple-changing Scorponok and a Super Wave with a Super Optimus Prime (featuring four vehicles, a trailer and electronic sounds). Optimus will also come in a two-pack with his greatest foe, Megatron.

▼ The Autobot motorcycle, Arcee, will be available in spring 2004.



▲ Demolish the Deception Dumptruck

Of course, the series just wouldn't be complete without the towering visage of Supreme Unicron, a staggeringly large figure that updates his look (first seen in *Transformers: The Movie*). Old-school fans shouldn't fear, though; Hasbro fully intends to keep producing G1 and *Universe* figures concurrently with the new influx of *Energion*.

However, one really terrific aspect of the new designs is that the various "linking" abilities work across figures, meaning you won't necessarily need specific figures for particular combos.

Fans will have plenty more

to focus on if they choose to follow the Dreamwave comic. Just don't try to find a **Transformers: Energion #1**; it begins at #19, picking up the numbering from the retiring *Armada* series. The hardcore should be pleased that beloved *Transformers* comic writer Simon Furman is in the fold for this new take. While events will have some similarities between the comics and the show, the goal for the comic's creative team is to give the book its own identity. Furman has promised the return of a character from *Headmasters* and even hints at the possibility that Megatron may have to team up with Optimus Prime!

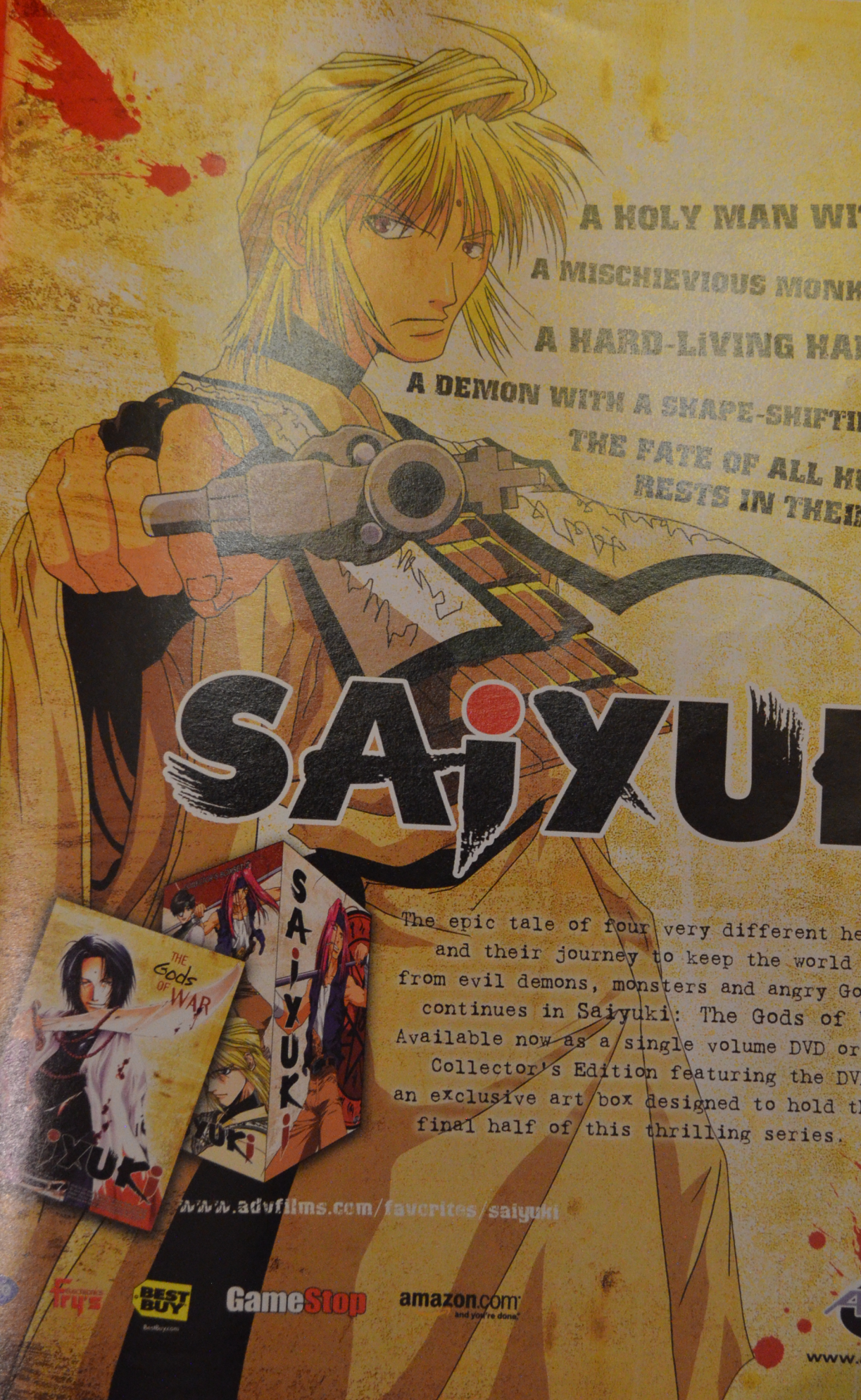
The big one, though, is the looming Cartoon Network series. There are facts floating around, like the knowledge that the animation will be CG based with some unique 3-D shadings. There doesn't seem to be any kid sidekicks, but it appears that there's a Sentai-type character. With Megatron and Optimus possibly teaming up, what else could happen?

One thing's certain: Rabid fans will be snatching up the toys and eagerly awaiting the next wave of the action. With the myriad changes in the *Transformers* Universe, that's the one thing that remains the same.

—TROY BROWNFIELD

Images courtesy of Hasbro





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A HARD-LIVING HALF-BREED.

A DEMON WITH A SHAPE-SHIFTING DRAGON.

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TOOLS & MATERIALS

Mac G3, Photoshop 5.5J, RETAS!
Pro, scanner, drawing paper, trace table,
black & colored pencils, erasers

STEP BY STEP

After the cel illustrations are animated by Umetsu, the work is divided up among the staff and passes through several hands, from color design and coloring to other design phases. Umetsu's vision is realized by personally directing the process at critical stages. He says the hardest thing is deciding what kinds of illustrations to do during the projects.



4. Draw the second-layer image

Draw the second layer of the cel. Knowing how many layers to use in an illustration comes with experience. Layers are good for adjusting element placement, but too many is too much work.



1. Do a rough sketch to crystallize your image

Think about it again when you have free time, and then all at once draw your idea in one go. Try to give overall balance using poses and placement. Also think about how to finish the pose.



5. Add color to the scanned images

After scanning in the line drawing, change the line that marks the shading boundary to the shading color from the design specs. Then select the region and fill all at once.



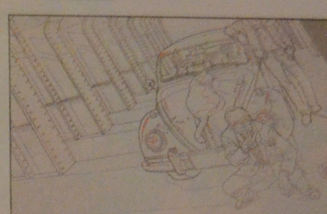
2. Use a trace table to clean up the sketch

Put the rough sketch on a trace table and make a line drawing from it using a soft, sharp pencil to make the main edges clear. Use this chance to add extra touches that weren't in the rough sketch.



6. Cut the image down to size

If the image is too big, cut off parts that won't fit as whole elements. Then color and combine them into the image with layers. Cut the parts into large chunks and at points that are easy to piece back together.



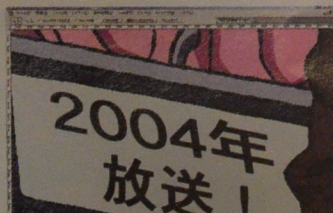
3. Draw the background cel

Position the drawing paper using a tap, a tool for rotating illustrations, and do a line drawing of the background elements. These will be scanned in separately and stacked in layers, so drawing them individually is important.



7. Special effects

In the age of cel animation, a special effects guy would do this with an airbrush, but now it's done with layers and a brush tool. You can get more effects by changing the way the layers stack.



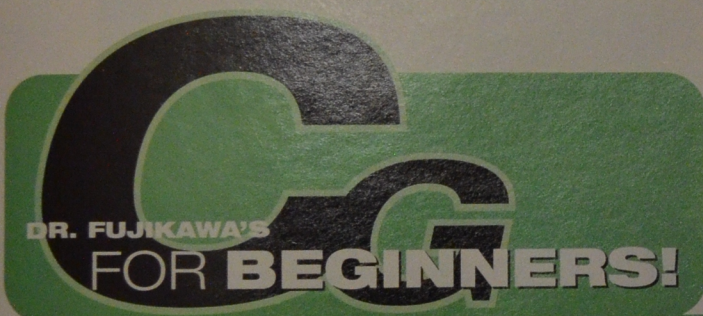
8. Process and insert text

Input text with a text tool. The shape is changed using a free transform of the text layer (first converted into an image layer) and is then pasted on. It's also good to process text in a separate file.



9. Arrange the layers

Arrange the separate layers into a single cel layout. Make fine adjustments to the size of the elements. Check distances and make sure things don't look like they're floating out of the image.



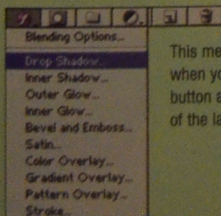
Keyword of the Month

What are "layer effects"?

The best thing about digitally drawing illustrations is that you can draw and process several images separately. And layers make it even easier!

In addition to blending modes, Photoshop offers "layer effects." These convenient functions allow you to easily add effects like shadows and lighting to layer images.

Layer effects in Photoshop



This menu pops up when you click the button at the base of the layer palette

You can combine layer effects

Like we show in the example, you can apply multiple layer effects to the same layer at the same time. And unlike filters, layer effects can be deleted or changed at will, making it fun and easy to try out all kinds of different designs.

Layer effects are as easy as the click of a single button

Surely everyone has seen the Drop Shadow and Bevel and Emboss layer effects. Drop Shadow makes images and text seem to pop out of the layer, while Bevel and Emboss makes things look three-dimensional. If you learn how to make use of layer effects, you can get special effects like these with the click of a button. And settings like the colors, lighting and direction of the shadows are completely up to you!

Examples of commonly-used Photoshop layer effects



He has a sharp eye and the skills to match

Yasuomi Umetsu—Loved for more than just drawing pretty girls

Yasuomi Umetsu has done beautiful animation work on such titles as **Megazone 23 PART II** and **Robot Carnival**, and his new TV anime **MEZZO** just began airing in Japan. For **MEZZO**, Umetsu came up with the original story and character designs, wrote the script and even directed! This month we'll learn about his feelings on art as he introduces us to the process he used to create one of the promotional posters for this new title.

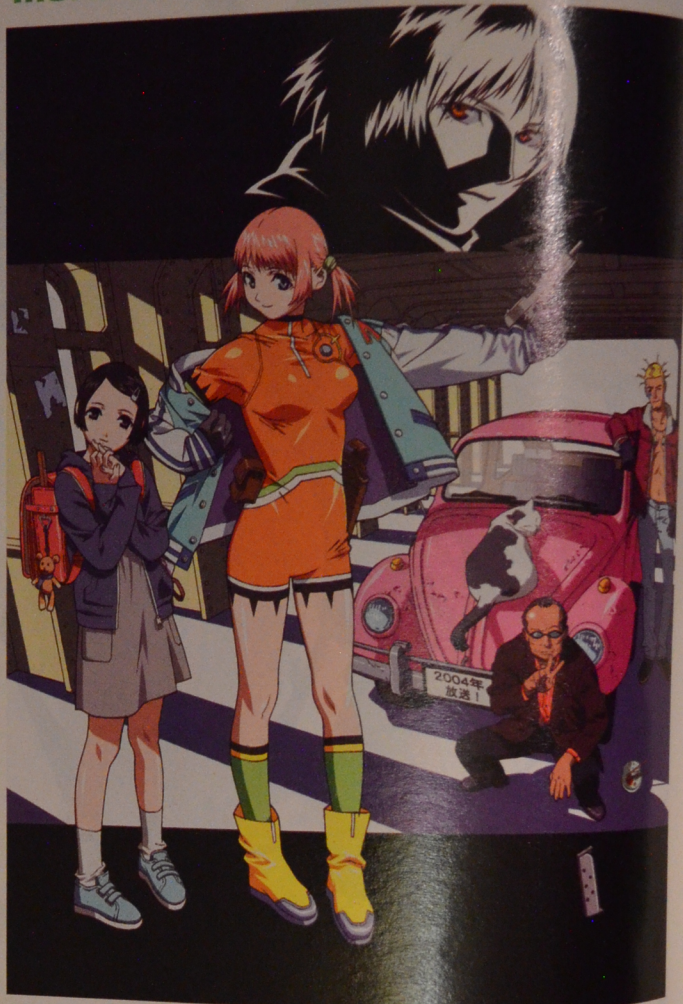
"This particular title corresponds to the sequel of an R-18 rated [restricted to viewers 18 and older] OVA series," says Umetsu. "Now normally you wouldn't touch an R-18 movie with a ten-foot pole, but once you've been on the production side, you find you actually have a lot more freedom in creating it. I personally like gun-fighting action, but on TV the portrayal [of violence] is always restricted. There's a limit to what you can do. And of course the reason is that lots of people watch TV [including children]. The current project is a spinoff [of the series] that made it onto TV, but even though it's on TV, we're gonna push it to the very edge, so hold on to your hats!"

Umetsu entered the world of animation because he likes drawing pictures in general, but he says he really loves

the medium of animation in particular.

"People often tell me I should draw manga or something instead, but I like the joint production sites just about as much as I like the drawing itself. A manga is basically a one-man job, and in some ways that makes it easier, but [when you're doing something on your own] it's too easy to fall into the trap of complacency. The [only] yardstick for the work you're creating [is yourself]. But in the case of anime, there's a production site where all these people on the staff work together, and ideas and solutions you'd never think of on your own end up coming out. It's more interesting to include things [into the project] that didn't come from you. I personally want to do sci-fi type stuff and gunfighting action and so forth, but since I'm the director, I think it's important for me to make use of the talents of the episode scriptwriters and cel animators and people like that. I'm very grateful to have my work taken up in this article, but [I also want to point out that] there are some incredible artists on my staff, and I want them to be in the spotlight, too."

Umetsu's kind words for his staff show the level of confidence he has in them. We're looking forward to seeing **MEZZO**!



▲ From a promotional poster for **MEZZO**. Set in Tokyo of the near future, it features stunning gunfighting action.



• **Yasuomi Umetsu**
He was born in 1960. He did many character designs and cel illustrations during the golden age of OVA production in the late '80s and early '90s. Representative works include **Megazone 23 PART II** and **Robot Carnival**, among many others. **A KITE**, which Umetsu both wrote and directed, will be made into a live-action Hollywood film directed by Rob Cohen.



▲ An illustration from a P-MATE pinup. Note the coquettish expression on this girl.

► From a promotional poster for the OVA **A KITE**. The contrast between the innocent cat and the gun-wielding young girl gives you a good sense of the story.

► This is from **KISS AND CRY**, a new animation written and directed by Umetsu. Currently in the planning phase, it's scheduled for theatrical release sometime in 2004.

▼ An illustration of Umetsu's original character Angela. He says he wanted to draw a mystical girl of beauty who also seemed old-fashioned.





JAPAN NOW



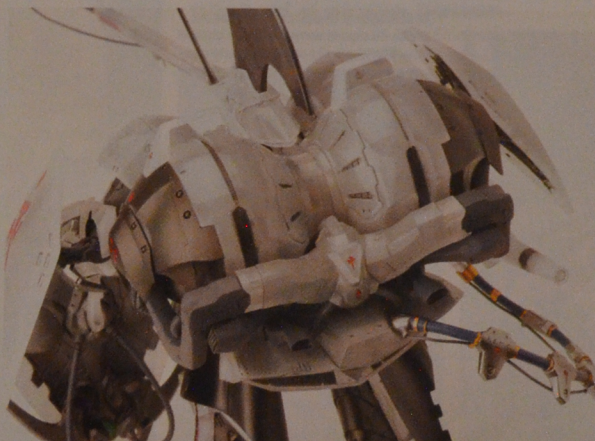
VOLKS

LED Mirage V-3 Inferno Napalm

This ultimate garage kit, based on the cover of the creator's art collection *Knight Flags*, is an embodiment of the techniques learned and developed over the previous *Mighty* series. The clear white parts can be polished and clear-coated to achieve a beautiful sheen. The number of parts has been reduced to 156, so if you have experience with garage kits, you can finish it for sure. 1:100 scale, 31 cm tall, 80 cm long.



▲ The outer shield is molded in clear white resin. See-through interior details are faithfully represented based on design sketches.



▲ The *Inferno Napalm* has an intimidating presence. Exquisite workmanship is visible in every inch. It's almost miraculous for a model with such huge equipment to stand without any support.

Text by TAKUYA YAMAMOTO shot by AKIRA AIKAWA
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BY SHIZURU HAYASHIYA

ARTIST OF ONEGAI TEACHER

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The latest Motor Headd variations have been released! The Five Star Stories

The newly revealed functionality of the Motor Headds, which have been battling in recent installments of *The Five Star Stories*, must have boosted modelers' motivation to build them. These models—a 1:100 scale LED *Mirage V-3 Inferno Napalm* by VOLKS and two 1:144 scale LED *Mirage B4* models (the *Destnias* and the *Mighty-Alpha Akatsukihime*) by WAVE—are based on sketches from the art collection *Knight Flags*. The master model for

the VOLKS kit was sculpted by the Zoukei-mura Inc. team led by Chiaki Nakajima, and the detailing is a true work of art that sets the standard for excellence.

Meanwhile, WAVE's *Destnias* and *Akatsukihime* were created by the famous craftsman Naoki Sato, who's known for his ability to sculpt dynamic proportions and create sharp details. These special models allow you to appreciate the high quality of Motor Headd sculpting, even in a 13 cm model.



▲ LED *Mirage V-3 Inferno Napalm*—Motor Headd sculptures are judged by the head and upper torso, and these have sharp engraving and combinations of complex surfaces. Structurally sound mechanisms and sculpting beauty coexist at the height of quality.



▲ *Mighty-Alpha Akatsukihime*

WAVE LED *Mirage B4 Destnias* *Mighty-Alpha Akatsukihime*

This LED *Mirage B4 Destnias*, which appeared in the manga, is molded in clear mauve. On the other hand, the *Mighty-Alpha Akatsukihime* is based on design sketches and is molded in clear orange. The resin-cast frame is common to both kits, and small parts are represented with white metal and photo-etched parts to enhance the details. Each unit comes with a unique decal sheet. The *Akatsukihime* should be available at any WAVE-attended event. 1:144 scale, 13.2 cm tall (excluding the head ornament).



▲ LED *Mirage B4 Destnias*



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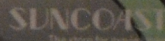
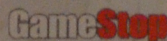


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text by YOKO OUCHI shot by HIROYA YOSHIZAWA



Freelance writer Yuka Waku embarks on a mission to solve a mystery—a mission that leads her to the secrets of the world! (Kadokawa Shoten)

Doubt the world you live in **Kami wa Chinmoku sezu**

The world is inundated with outrageous things, and the To-Gakkai society is there to watch and observe them. The society has published books on UFO sightings, paranormal hoaxes, cult religion and various other topics. Chairman of the society is none other than sci-fi novelist Hiroshi Yamamoto, who after four and a half long years has finally completed his latest novel—and it's outrageously good!

The story is told by the main character Yuka Waku through a series of memories. Both of her parents were killed in a freak accident when she was very young, causing her to doubt the existence of God.

"In the book, she believed that one day she would have a moment of awakening, and that was my experience exactly," confesses Yamamoto. "When you were a kid, didn't you ever think things like what if the scene on the horizon was just a huge painted wall mural of some kind? Or what if nothing exists beyond the place you're in right now? I spent my whole life with doubts like that."

The sensitive young Yamamoto eventually became acquainted with the world of sci-fi novels and learned that he wasn't alone in his feelings.

"Aren't sci-fi books filled with themes of virtual realities? But I was always disappointed by their lack of realism. There would be huge holes in the story where you just knew there's no way anything like that could ever happen. It's like, if you're gonna lie, then at least try to convince me!"

His complaint stems from a deep love of the sci-fi genre.

"This is just my own personal theory, but I think sci-fi novels are just big fish stories told in deadly serious tones. It's because the stories are so preposterous that you have to line up 99 pieces of evidence just to prop up a single lie. And readers lose interest when they see the holes in the case. That's why in addition to covering up all the holes I could find, I thought I would try to bring out the reality by recounting actual data. For example, when writers set out to proclaim the fiction that this world is only a virtual reality, they never really think deeply about the logistics. Like, how big of a computer would you actually need if you wanted to create a perfect virtual space? It's like what Yuka's brother says in the book: It would be impossible with today's technology. If that's the case, then you need to have it created by something that transcends humanity in some way."

Yamamoto decided not to use the idea of some gigantic and highly advanced supercomputer array. Instead, he employed the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent being—in a word, God.

"This was something else that shaped my own ideas about. I chose God for a reason. Hardly any books that deal with the idea of God ever feature any kind of confrontation with him. They tend to stop one step short of it. That's probably because God is just too big to deal with adequately. But I think there are a lot of times when you want to read past that point [and actually get to the confrontation with God]. So I decided that I wanted to write a book [using that idea], and I wouldn't stop until I was personally satisfied with where it ended up."

First and foremost, the book offers depictions of numerous people and phenomena relating to God. The book includes cases of UFO sightings in various places around the world, reports on actual miracles and the state of cult religion in society. It's a running commentary on all kinds of rare and bizarre occurrences, and in keeping with the spirit of the chairman of the To-Gakkai society, it recounts cases of experiments on people with paranormal abilities and offers information on interplanetary exploration. Everything from robotics to neurology is offered up as a "fact" used to question the existence of God. Just getting through all of these facts is a fantastically entertaining learning exercise!

"My own interest in science came from reading sci-fi novels. So nothing would make me happier than having someone develop an interest in science or sci-fi after reading this book."

The story's realism is considerably enhanced by the inclusion of scenes of Internet troubles and collapsing currency values, things that might just happen in real life. Readers will no doubt feel like the main character Yuka, who had all her fixed notions overturned not once but twice and three times over.

And in the end, having passed through a countless variety of experiences, Yuka will finally arrive at a conclusion...

"My own answers to some of these questions are found in the book. How you respond to those answers is up to you. Regardless of whether the world really exists or whether it's some kind of made-up reality, there's no changing the fact that you and I still have to live in it. So what do we need in order to do that? I'm hoping this book will be a chance for everybody to start thinking about that question."



Hiroshi Yamamoto

Born 1956 in Kyoto, he has written many books, including *Laplace no Ma*, *Cyber Knight*, *Galaxy Tripper Miha* and *Yoma Yako* (Kadokawa Sneaker Bunko). He's also the chairman of the To-Gakkai society, which puts out the Tondemo Book series (Yosensha). Yamamoto's official homepage is homepage3.nifty.com/hirorin/.



USA NOW

Channel Zero and Channel Zero: Jennie One

REVIEW



Channel Zero and Channel Zero: Jennie One © Brian Wood.
Channel Zero: Jennie One artwork © Becky Cloonan

New York City, present day—but you wouldn't know it from the surface. What most Americans see as a productive world filled with amazing technological advancements and ever-increasing conveniences, Jennie 2.5 sees for what it is: a collection of mind-control devices used by the government to benefit its evil goals. Such is the premise for *Channel Zero*, a truly interesting and quite frightening story masked as non-fiction. With an exalting introduction from Warren Ellis (the creator of *Transmetropolitan*), the book presents a compelling message that's fortified by a seemingly endless barrage of powerful artwork.

These two graphic novels follow the story of Jennie 2.5, a woman angered by the current state of America. In *Channel Zero*, the first book in the series, the plot reveals her desperate battle to save people from complete apathy and the Clean Act, a bill designed to regulate all forms of media. Corporate America quickly reacts to her attacks; when Jennie starts scheduling three-second pirate broadcasts encouraging people to think for themselves, the TV stations simply sell commercial time around it. And why not? They are the most watched three seconds of airtime. Jennie 2.5 has to do something—and something big—or else America will see her actions as just another publicity stunt. If Jennie doesn't lift America's iron curtain, its people won't be able to see the world and will follow their leaders blindly.

Channel Zero is written and illustrated by the amazingly talented Brian Wood. Though each panel can pass for a piece of modern art, it's presented in a way that allows easy flow and readability. And while the pacing is sometimes slowed by a recurring dual dialogue requiring the reader to multitask, this allows necessary moments of reflection. Pages are littered with fictional text from radio and TV news broadcasts in between character dialogue providing perspective on the events of the story, often from an international viewpoint. Highlighting

Wood's true purpose for the book are several included poster and sticker designs, complete with requests that people photocopy and post them. All of these pieces of propaganda are emblazoned with the phrase "Your Mind is a Weapon. Use It."



The second book in the series, *Channel Zero: Jennie One*, is the prequel story of the days just preceding the Clean Act and how Jennie 2.5 came to be. We first encounter Jennie as an art student, but not for long. Jennie gets fed up when she is reported to the police for "dissident behavior" for one of her paintings.

Deciding to join in the protest against the upcoming Clean Act, she soon

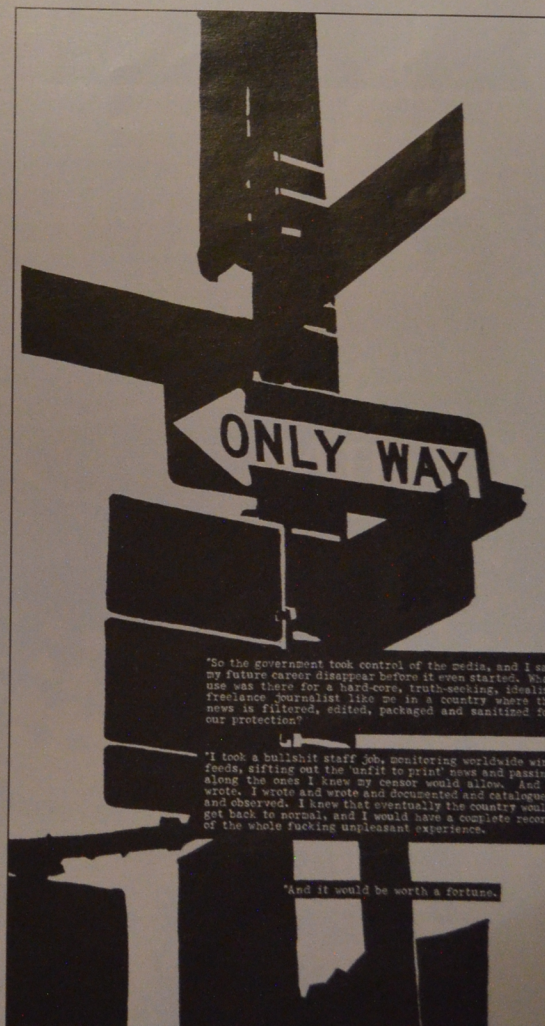
faces the harsh reality of a controlling government when one of her friends is shot for painting graffiti on the subway. After some research on the Internet, Jennie discovers how serious the situation really is and begins her new life as Jennie 2.5.

For the prequel book, Wood is joined by artist Becky Cloonan. Anime fans may find Cloonan's name familiar since she is a staple in the artist's alleys of many East Coast anime conventions with Studio Estrigious. Don't expect this book to be done in a typical anime style. Her talents are showcased in a unique brand of dark punk art. For the purpose of the narrative, the dirty and real look of the artwork far

surpasses standard images of super heroic, glossy perfection normally found in comics. *Channel Zero: Jennie One*, in contrast to *Channel Zero*, employs a more traditional comic style and is lighter on the in-your-face politics. Instead, the prequel focuses on setting up the fictional universe, its history and Jennie's reasons for performing intellectual terrorism. In these efforts, the book is entirely successful and adds layers of meaning by exploring the dangerous ramifications of a seemingly innocent government prospect such as the Clean Act.

—NICOLAS DUARTE

Release info: On sale now in the US from AIT/Planet Lar



"And it would be worth a fortune."

REVIEW

Fruits Basket Volume 1



© 2003 Natsuki Takaya

When Tohru Honda's grandfather's house needs remodeling, she has to find a temporary place to live. Instead of moving in with a friend, she decides to live in a tent in the forest where she soon discovers a strange house on her way to school. After snooping around a bit, the inhabitants are revealed: Shigure Sohma, a skirt-chasing author, and Yuki Sohma, known as the "Prince" of Tohru's school. Everything goes normally at school until Tohru accidentally puts her arms around Kyo Sohma (a relative of Shigure and Yuki), and he turns into a cat. Is this Tohru's special power? No, the Sohma family is cursed by the twelve-plus-one animals of the Chinese zodiac. Sound wacky? It is.

I started reading *Fruits Basket* expecting to dislike it; however, in just a few pages I was hooked. For fans of *Fushigi Yugi*, the character personalities and interactions are very similar in *Fruits Basket*—they evoke

the same sort of emotional response. To liken the two more, a seamless mix of folklore, magic, fighting, comedy and high school drama prevails. And while the story so far seems typically shojo in its girl-meets-boy formula, there are constant hints at an underlying and developing storyline that should keep it universally interesting.

Fruits Basket's art follows the norm for most anime/manga. Nothing stands out for better or worse, suggesting a solid, consistent approach. This is rare in manga, since the frenetic, sudden changes in story (as when characters become super-deformed caricatures) give rise to a hodge-podge of techniques.

The one complaint I have is that the paneling can be confusing, often serving to disorient during action scenes. As most manga are inherently designed to be real page-turners propelled by a series of related images,

this can prove tricky. Don't worry, though, you're not reading it wrong—just keep going.

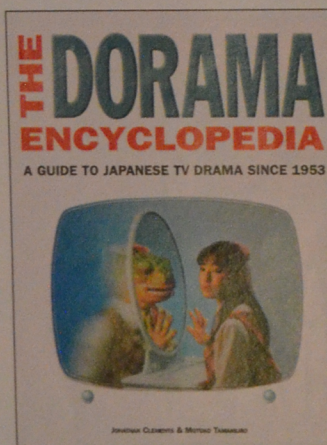
People may wonder how the manga compares to the anime. The manga basically follows the plotline of the first five episodes of the anime; many key frames of animation are actually pulled straight from the comic. Interestingly, there's more story and detail in some of the anime. Even so, I recommend the manga as a sound introduction to this unique property.

—NICOLAS DUARTE

Release info: Available February 2004 in the US from TOKYOPOP Inc.

REVIEW

The Dorama Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese TV Drama Since 1953



Anime fans are well acquainted with Japan's animated TV programs, but Japanese live-action TV? Stateside there's been *Ultraman*, of course, and the sentai (battle team) sci-fi series that have been brought to America (in drastically edited form) as the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*. Fans of Osamu Tezuka may know about the pre-anime *Astro Boy* live-action series (that he hated) and the 1960s *Space Giants* based on his *Ambassador Magma* manga. More recently, *GTO* was made into a mega-popular live-action TV show before the anime, and some new anime series like *Android Kikaider: The Animation* are remakes of classic live-action series. Obviously there has been a ton of all sorts of live-action Japanese TV over the years, so a reference book about it is a good thing. The question for *Newtype USA* readers: Is there really enough content to make this a worthwhile purchase for anime fans?

You bet! *The Dorama Encyclopedia* was co-authored by Jonathan Clements in the witty style that NTUSA's readers should be familiar with through his regular columns. Clements is also the co-author of *The Anime Encyclopedia*, an anime must-have from Stone Bridge Press.

A 20-page introduction summarizes the history of TV in Japan, highlighting absolutely strange and fascinating trivia from the first television broadcast in Japan to the first American series on Japanese TV (1955's animated *Superman*) and Japan's TV broadcast of John F. Kennedy's assassination.

The book is mostly plot synopses of TV dramas, using the word *drama* in its broad sense to mean fictional plays, including comedies. Clements and co-author Motoko Tamamuro know how to emphasize the details that will most appeal to anime fans. Moments of outrageous humor, identification of

actors who've done anime voices, and programs based on manga or Japanese fantasy (from modern novels to ancient folk legends) are all given unique attention.

The Dorama Encyclopedia is well worth the price for leisurely browsing. Plus, if Japanese live-action TV starts to become as popular in America as anime, you'll be ahead of the pack with this thorough reference guide.

—FRED PATTEN

Release info: On sale now in the US from Stone Bridge Press

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GetBackers Volume 1



© 2003 Yuya Aoki and Rando Ayamine

You're walking down the street when you notice two teens, one with auburn hair and the other bleach-blond, leaning up against a far wall. Never mind the fact that they haven't eaten in so long they're actually transparent—you're looking at the GetBackers, the elite recovery agency with an (almost) 100% success rate.

As the GetBackers, Ban Mido and Ginji Amano are repo men for hire, using their supernatural powers to return what's been stolen. Ban's power is the Evil Eye, which can create a one-minute-long illusion in the mind of the beholder, while Ginji can conduct (and transmit) massive amounts of electricity. With abilities like that, you'd think the GetBackers would be filthy rich by now—but part of what makes this story amusing is that Ban and Ginji are far from the sharpest tacks in the box.

The story is split into two separate story arcs, called Acts. The first Act

introduces us to the GetBackers, who decide to take on the yakuza to rescue a homeless man's daughter. Lucky for us, said daughter happens to be well-endowed and enjoys sleeping in the nude. Act two showcases the first appearance of Hevn, an associate of the GetBackers who looks like she's stepped right from the pages of "Big Uns," *AI Bundy's* magazine of choice. She somehow manages to keep her clothes on long enough to offer the GetBackers a job—one that could make them very rich.

GetBackers is lowbrow humor to the extreme...but it's funny nonetheless. From Ginji losing his cool and shocking a vending machine into forking over his soft drink, to the GetBackers being caught red-handed stealing an oversized cat statue, this manga delivers some genuine laugh-out-loud moments. Much of the story's impact is thanks to artist Rando Ayamine, whose style draws the

reader in with its nonstop barrage of close-ups, zooms, and hardcore action shots.

Content-wise, *GetBackers* seems a little too extreme for its 13+ rating. Faces are ripped open, characters assert that they "ain't f---ing with you no more!" and grown men are dry-humped by dogs. Translation-wise, there seems to have been an undue (and artificial) stress on making the dialogue "hip," so that even the girl behind the counter at the DMV eschews "Wow" in favor of "Say what?"

Is *GetBackers* entertaining? For me personally, yes. The genre won't appeal to everyone. But if you're looking for a few raw laughs, *GetBackers* delivers.

—JAVIER LOPEZ

Release info: Available February 2004 in the US from TOKYOPOP Inc.

A.I. Love You Volume 1



© 2003 Ken Akamatsu

When it comes to lovable losers, Ken Akamatsu is a genius.

Take Keitaro, the affable dolt from Akamatsu's popular *Love Hina* series. He stumbles, he bumbles, he botches almost everything he sets his mind to—yet, he also has a house full of nubile, young gals who all fall for him, simply because he's so dang nice.

The best thing about Akamatsu's creations? They may be saps, but they are never too sappy. Sure, Keitaro pines away for Naru. Yes, he collects sticker-club photos...of himself! But he also gets to cop a few unintended feels along the way, making him a guy who gets more action than most of us, whether he means to or not.

It all makes for some fantastic comedy, with a little tasteful romance thrown in. Y'know, for all the ladies in the audience.

Now, TOKYOPOP is releasing Akamatsu's first serialized manga, *A.I. Love You*, starring high school student, computer geek and all-around loser Hitoshi Kobe. Think of him as Keitaro Jr., and you'll have a good idea of what he's like.

The volume starts off with a string of familiar snafus: Hitoshi wakes up

late, has to cram for a test, finds a love note from the luscious Kimika in his locker, and (as instructed) waits for her behind the gym, where he's later spotted, laughed at by the class (including Kimika, who set up the prank), and then scolded by his teacher for missing his test. Ugh! But that's not all. In typical Akamatsu fashion, Hitoshi then suffers through the rest of the school day, gets soaked in the rain as he walks home, then bitten by a stray dog. All this, and we're only on the sixth page!

Lest you think it's all bad news, Hitoshi has one notable skill: He can program, and he's written some brilliant A.I. code for a virtual gal pal who provides him with some much-needed comfort. Ah, if only she was real...

Enter a freak thunderstorm, a well-placed bolt of lightning, and Program No. 30 is suddenly a reality—a fully nude, very willing reality.

Saati (as Hitoshi names her) quickly becomes a part of Hitoshi's life, helping him out, cheering him on, and making an even grander mess of things. Meanwhile, Hitoshi tries to sort out his feelings for Saati, desperate to determine what to do with her.

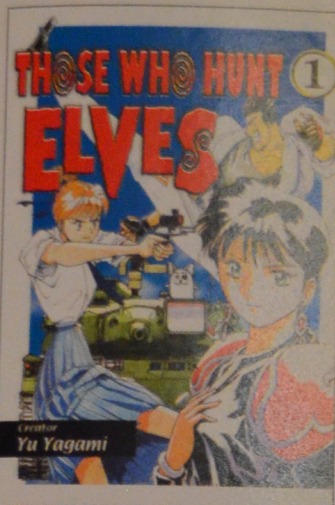
The setup allows for some hilarious situations, with Saati battling against the jealous Kimika, Saati trying to cook (using oil paints!), Saati manipulating bank machines to procure some extra cash, Saati being plain clueless in ways that make Hitoshi's cluelessness even more apparent. Readers familiar with *Love Hina* will see a lot of similar situations and recognize some early attempts at the over-the-top humor of his later series. One thing's for sure: Akamatsu knows how to milk a joke, and in *A.I.* he unabashedly hammers home the same bits until they get funny again. Akamatsu also knows how to pull back for a solemn moment; when Saati suffers from a virus near the end of this volume, I honestly cared about the outcome.

Remember that this is Akamatsu's first series, so the visuals aren't as refined as you might expect. The girls are lovely, certainly—but the sight-gags aren't up to the standard set by *Love Hina*. It's still good stuff—but it's an early work, and that shows.

—GARY STEINMAN

Release info: Available February 2004 in the US from TOKYOPOP Inc.

Those Who Hunt Elves Volume 1



©Yu Yagami 1995

Hilariously deranged almost beyond human comprehension, *Those Who Hunt Elves* crams liberal doses of action and comedy on top of a bizarrely original premise. Award-winning actress Airi, martial arts expert Junpei and tank-driving military aficionado Ritsuko find themselves inexplicably ripped out of their homeland of Japan and stuck in a world of fantasy creatures. Mistress Celcia, an elven princess, attempts a spell to send them home. Unfortunately, five symbols that were essential to the spell have dispersed across the land, attaching themselves to the bodies of five other female elves. There's only one solution for our heroes: Find every female elf they can...and strip them!

Yu Yagami makes this outrageous idea work with fast pacing, witty dialogue and tangential situations that make the most of the characters. Every time there's a potential for something to go wrong, it usually goes disastrously wrong with hysterical results. The natural tensions in the group escalate when Celcia finds herself stuck in dog form after their encounter with Amazonian elven warrior Gabriella. Outmatched by Celcia's sorcery, she resorts to several contingency plans

(or "con-contingency plans," as she puts it) that are defeated by each member of the group in turn. It's a clever, effective way of establishing many of the important traits for each protagonist.

One pleasant diversion from the main situation comes when Airi finds herself pursued by a young man that is dating 57 different women at the same time. A self-proclaimed master of seduction (mainly because he has a book on seducing women), he arranges a cute meeting with Airi and attempts to close the deal from there. The use of the seduction book's rules in accompanying captions is fun, as is the lout's dismay as Airi gently and effectively rebuffs him. A hilarious payoff later results when he sets up a scenario where he might be a hero, and ends up encountering an angry Junpei instead.

Yagami's art possesses true comical flair. In addition to utilizing solid action scenes and a veritable library of funny expressions, he's not afraid to do things like depicting scenes in stick figure form for heightened comedic effect. Yagami also easily shifts from the realistic (the studied details of Ritsuko's T-74 tank) to the

exaggerated (a two-page splash of Gabriella's bare chest). He shows total commitment to his whacked-out premise; even when something completely ridiculous is happening, like a scene where a giant teddy bear inhabited by a cat spirit tears down a house and gets set ablaze by a burning arrow, you buy it in terms of the larger narrative insanity.

Those Who Hunt Elves earns every bit of its Teen (15+) rating, mainly due to its light use of swearing and, obviously, occasional nudity. Still, the fare is much more lighthearted than graphic. The entire intent behind the series is certainly the desire to amuse. *Those Who Hunt Elves* works best when you turn off the plausibility alarms and settle in for a good dose of sharply original comic fun.

—TROY BROWNFIELD

Release info: On sale now in the US from ADV Manga

Aquarium



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From the pen of Tomoko Taniguchi, creator of the fairytale-esque story collection *Princess Prince* and the titles *Call Me Princess* and *Popcorn Romance*, comes another shoujo story collection, *Aquarium*!

In the title story, Naoka Uchiyama is a girl whose dreams have come apart at the seams. Though she's bright and studies hard, she failed to get into the high school of her choice—the one where her middle school crush and most of her friends have gone. Her only solace lies in the creatures of the sea, at the local aquarium. But soon she loses that too, as her melancholy introspection is interrupted by a boy named Haruki Usami, who insists on hanging around her. Can he help her forget her troubles? Will she ever make any friends at her new school? Or will she give in to despair and make a choice she might regret forever? Darker than Taniguchi's typical tales, it's also an important one that

addresses the issue of teen suicide.

In the second tale, "The Flying Stewardess," we meet young flight attendant Shoko Aoki and experience what starts out as a typical day of this so-called glamorous lifestyle. Then she discovers that one of the passengers is Egawa, the boy she had a crush on in high school! He seems more than happy to see her. But is he really interested in her—or is he, like so many men she meets in her line of work, just looking for the notoriety that comes with dating a stewardess? As she tries to sort out her love life, will she be able to maintain her professionalism and set a good example for the students on her flight?

The final tale, "The Heart is Your Kingdom," is a thoughtful, spiritual one. Matsushita has loved Suzuki since they were both children, sitting together on a church pew. But every time she sees him now, she scowls! Why can't she give him the smile she wants to?

Can she ever tell him her feelings? Or will she lose him to Honda, her rival? It might take a miracle for her to prove they are "meant to be," and restore her faith in love...

While creator Taniguchi worries that Western audiences won't relate to her stories of Japanese teen culture, I believe her concerns are unfounded. She deftly weaves a tale that gets to the heart of the reader, regardless of personal experiences. The stories she tells are of finding and holding onto dreams, no matter how bleak the future may seem—as well as finding new hope where you may never have thought to look. Her fans won't be disappointed, and neither will new readers.

—WOLFEN MOONDAUGHTER

Release info: On sale now in the US from CPM Manga

BAGGED & BOARDED

by COREY HENSON

READING LIST

1. With the movie just around the corner, the big **Hellboy** push begins this month with some sweet items from Dark Horse. Not only will they release the official **The Art of the Movie** TPB, but they'll also be re-releasing the excellent **The Art of Hellboy** in a softcover edition. Plus there are two movie PVC sets—"Good Guys" and "Bad Guys."
2. **Superman: "Godfall" (DC)**—Michael Turner, Joe Kelly and Talent Caldwell team up for a six-part saga that, beginning this month, runs through the **Superman** titles, and finds an adult Kal-El back on a not-quite-exploded Krypton and facing a dissident uprising.
3. **The Pulse #1 (Marvel)**—Brian Michael Bendis relaunches **Alias** minus all the cussin' and sinnin', but with a new direction and supporting cast featuring J. Jonah Jameson and **Deadline's** Kat Farrell. Mark Bagley handles the art chores on the first arc before handing his pencil over to Michael Gaydos later this year.
4. **Secret War: Book One (Marvel)**—It's that Bendis guy again, this time scribing a five-issue quarterly mini that promises a massive throwdown between, like, everyone in the Marvel U NYC. Story details are being kept, uh, secret, but you'll want to pick it up to gaze upon the gloriously painted artwork by Gabriele Dell'Otto, who makes his American debut here.
5. **Herobear and the Kid: Saving Time #1 (of 3) (Astonish Books)**—Mike Kunkel's second Herobear miniseries finally arrives. Buy it and see why Kunkel is the second coming of Bill Watterson.



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Q&A

Erik Ko

—Chief of Operations for UDON

1. UDON recently moved the **Street Fighter** comic from Image to Devil's Due. What prompted this change?

2004 is the 15th anniversary of **Street Fighter** in the US. UDON has extended our relationship with Capcom to do more than just the comic book. We are going to have collector's busts, statues, posters, lithos and other **SF** products out to coincide with the anniversary event. Therefore, we have to look for a new partner that can not only accommodate us on the publishing side, but also on the products side.

2. Was there any fear that it would be a mistake?

We have been choosing our partners very carefully. Image is a great publisher in that if you were to publish a comic, there is no doubt they are the first choice. With Devil's Due, they can provide us the "expanded options" that we need to grow the **Street Fighter** franchise with.

3. Are there any plans for UDON to become a self-reliant publisher in the future?

At this moment, the main UDON business is still working with clients providing them creative services. We are still working with Marvel (**Sentinel**, **Cable/Deadpool**, etc.) and DC (**Robotech**, **ThunderCats**, **ICandy**, etc.) and other publishers. **Street Fighter** is more like a pet project that we took on ourselves, doing it as fans for the fans out there.

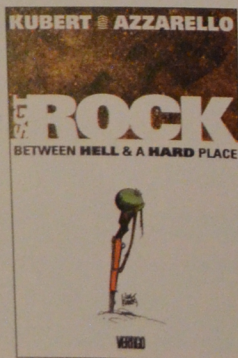
REVIEWS

Sgt. Rock: Between Hell & A Hard Place (DC/Vertigo)

1944: The men of Easy Company are in the thick of things, tussling with the Axis and struggling to stay alive. Following an intense battle, Easy takes four SS officers prisoner. But then three of the Nazis turn up dead—mercilessly shot at point blank range—and the fourth goes missing. And it looks like one of Easy's own is the culprit. But is it murder if a soldier kills an enemy in the midst of war? For the men of Easy Company, the only good Nazi is a dead Nazi. But for Sgt. Frank Rock, the answer isn't as simple. It's up to Rock to uncover the murderer and protect

not only his moral code but that of Easy Company as well.

Master storyteller Joe Kubert, who rose to prominence in the Silver Age on the **Sgt. Rock** ongoing title, handles all the visuals, including art, coloring and lettering. Brian Azzarello, best known for his Eisner-winning **100 Bullets**, deftly creates a script that is both a harrowing war story and a gripping morality fable. Both are at the top of their games (and cheers to DC for bucking tradition by giving Kubert top billing).



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Fantastic Four (Marvel)

Writer Mark Waid managed to re-energize Marvel's warhorse with fresh takes on familiar situations and an unabashed love of the characters' potential. His artistic collaborators, Mike Wieringo and Howard Porter, have been top-notch. On the recent "Authoritative Action" arc, Waid and Porter gave us a Reed Richards that was driven to eradicate the legacy of Dr. Doom. Alienating his teammates, the government and even his wife, Richards seemed to be going off the deep end. Leave it to Waid and Marvel's Smartest Man to be twelve steps ahead of the readers. Unfortunately, Doom may be just as brilliant.

—TROY BROWNFIELD



Image courtesy of Marvel Comics

Fade from Blue

(Second to Some Studios)
Carrying the indie drama torch that was lit by books like **Strangers in Paradise**, Myatt Murphy and Scott Dalrymple's **Fade from Blue** focuses on the travails of four half-sisters and the jumbled wreckage of their collective past. The creative team was Eisner-nominated as "Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition," and with good reason. Wordsmith Murphy has a knack for tight dialogue and intriguing characters; the immediate standout is Christa, a chain-smoking magazine writer with miles of attitude. Dalrymple's art is strikingly accomplished, his command of facial expressions is impressive, and he can make a scenery chase scenes.

—TROY BROWNFIELD

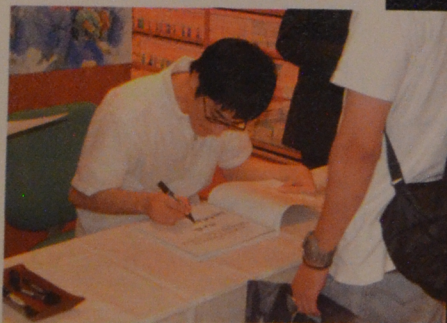
Those who have played the PS2 game *Mobile Suit Gundam Meguriai Sora* ("Mobile Suit Gundam Encounters in Space") will be delighted to see the simultaneous releases of the famous MS-06 R-1 and R-2. As mentioned in the previous issue, each unit can be converted to the normal F-Type as well. You should check out the differences between the normal type and the high-mobility type. This month, we're revealing all the parts included in each package. Take a look at the Giant Baz bazooka symbolizing Johnny Raiden, the pilot of the R-2!

This month, we're also covering the release of the 18th installment of GFF, the RX-78-4 *Gundam Unit 4*. This unit makes its appearance in *Meguriai Sora*. Because it's GFF, you know expectations are high! Surprisingly, this model will be compatible with the RX-78 NT-1 *Alex*. These two units were developed in two different facilities, and there doesn't seem to be any connection between them, but both are based on the RX-78 and were developed during the same time period, so they must share structural components. If the *Unit 4* and the *Alex* are indeed derived from a common unit, fans will certainly appreciate the compatibility. More details will become available later, but for now let's check out a fully assembled pre-production model!

DESIGNS & PRODUCTS

Report on the book signing for Katoki Hajime Designs & Products—Approved Gundam

Book signings were held at the Tamagawa Hashimaya and Kokubunji branches of the Kinokuniya bookstore last September 27 and 28, celebrating the release of the book *Katoki Hajime Designs & Products—Approved Gundam*. It had been a year since his last signing party. Enthusiastic fans were arriving early in the morning each day despite some train delays, long lines formed outside the stores before the signing started. Everyone seemed very excited with the opportunity to talk with the author in a friendly and casual atmosphere.



◆◆ Katoki carefully signs each book. There were some female fans among the vast majority of young male fans, and even a few older fans who brought their families. Since several anime production studios are located near the Kokubunji location, many anime professionals visited the party as well.

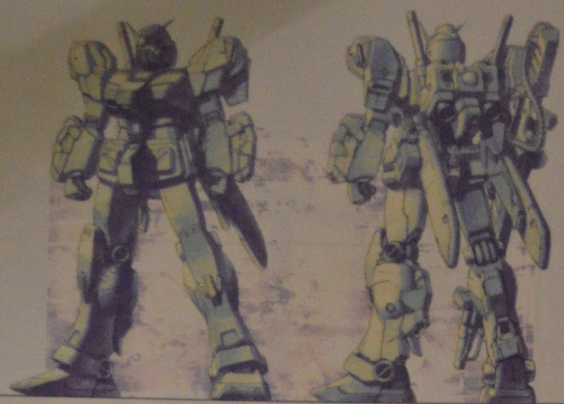


Katoki Hajime ガトキハジメ デザイン アンド プロダクツ DESIGNS & PRODUCTS -09

This month we report on the latest GFF installment and bring news from Mr. Katoki's book signing!

text by KOTARO HAYASHI
shot by TAKASE PHOTO OFFICE / ENTANIYA
©創通エージェンシー・サンライズ
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Gundam Unit 4— GFF's 18th installment rolls out!



Compatible with the RX-78 NT-1 Alex

The Unit 4 was designed to be the primary weapon for the next generation, while the Alex was developed for Newtypes—in other words, custom-made for Amuro. The Unit 4 and Alex were built in the two separate research facilities of Jabrow and Augusta, and don't seem to share any connections. But if you notice when each unit was

developed and the fact that both use the frame of the RX-78, it's reasonable to assume that they were derived from a common unit. If so, the cross-compatibility feature is a fascinating twist. However, the exteriors of the two units are so different that many parts are needed for conversion. See for yourself how the model was designed!



GUNDAM FIX FIGURATION #0018 RX-78-4 Gundam Unit 4

During the One Year War, seven RX-78s were said to have been built. The first three were released by GFF, but the details of the remaining four haven't been fully revealed. This Unit 4 is believed to have been developed based on the Unit 2, and the magnetic coating was added to improve its mobility. This unit appears in *Gaiden Sora Senko no Hate ni...*, the bonus feature of the PS2 game *Mobile Suit Gundam Meguriai Sora*, so it's assumed to have been used in actual combat. The Unit 4 has been available as a plastic model and as an action figure in the Mobile Suit in Action series, and with the release of GFF, the lineup will finally be complete.



ZEONOGRAPHY #3001a / #3001b

MS-06 R-1 / R-2 High-Mobility Zaku II

On Sale Now in Japan

Johnny Raiden is unbound by ideology, and fights only for his honor. Shin Matsunaga is a career soldier who's strongly tied by mutual trust to Admiral Dozle Zabi. The R-Type High-Mobility Zaku II, piloted by these two distinctive ace pilots, is exceptionally popular, considering the many Zaku II variations in existence. Please note that even the R-1 and R-2 differ slightly in details such as the backpack and lower legs. Johnny Raiden's suit includes the Giant Baz bazooka, his signature weapon, and each unit is loaded with other interesting features. Also, both units can be converted to the F-Type, so you can enjoy making up new suits that official art doesn't even exist for yet!

Shin Matsunaga's MS-06 R-1 High-Mobility Zaku II, also known as the "White Wolf," was feared by the Federation. The coloring and weaponry of this suit made it less prominent than Raiden's, as if representing the philosophical differences between the two pilots. On a side note, both models include a head without the commander's ornament.



Johnny Raiden's MS-06 R-2 High-Mobility Zaku II is also known as the "Red Lightning." It includes familiar weapons from the Mobile Suit Variations series—a welcome bonus for fans. Will it be displayed alongside Char's red Zaku someday?



THE COMPLETE RULES GOTTA GET IT GIVEAWAYS

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3. **HOW TO ENTER:** Contest begins at 12:00 AM (CPT) on January 10 and ends at 11:59 PM (CPT) on February 28. Only one entry per person. Mechanically or digitally reproduced entries will not be accepted. You may enter the Contest in one of two ways: (1) You must completely fill out both sides of the postcard insert, affix a stamp on the card, and mail it to the pre-printed address:

Gotta Get It Giveaways
Newtype USA, Inc.
PO Box 631607
Houston, Texas 77263-9901

(2) To receive a free entry postcard, you can send a request with your name and mailing address on a 3X5 note card, as well as a self-address stamped, letter-sized envelope, to:

Contest Entry Form Request / Gotta Get It Giveaways
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Houston, Texas 77263-9901

All entries must be postmarked by February 28. Answers to survey questions will be used for statistical purposes and may be published in the magazine and/or on the Newtype USA website, but individual answers will not be published. All entries become the property of the sponsors and will not be returned. By entering the Contest, entrants agree to be added to the Newtype USA mailing list which may be shared with other companies at the discretion of Newtype USA, Inc. Sponsors are not responsible for late, lost, damaged, incomplete, illegible, postage due, misdirected entries, human error, hardware or software malfunctions, or network failures of any other kind which could restrict entry. By entering the Contest, entrants agree to be bound by these Official Rules and the decisions of the sponsors.

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You need not be present to win. Winners will be notified by telephone, mail or email. All taxes and any other fees or costs associated with the acceptance or use of any prize are the sole responsibility of the winners. Winners may be required to execute and notarize an Affidavit of Eligibility and Publicity Consent and Release.

Newtype USA reserves the right to require the Affidavit of Eligibility at its sole discretion or as required by law. If a winner fails to return a properly signed Affidavit within ten (10) days of mailing or if any prize notification or prize is returned as undeliverable, the winner will be disqualified and an alternate winner will be selected. If there is a dispute as to the owner of an email address, it will be deemed submitted by the email account holder per the records of the email service provider. Each winner accepting a prize consents to the use of his/her name and likeness for promotional and publicity purposes without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. (When requested to do so, each winner agrees to report for publicity photograph sittings at such place as may be designated by the sponsors of this Contest, unless prohibited by law). For a list of prize winners and/or Official Rules, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Newtype USA, Inc. Contest Rules and Winners; PO Box 631607; Houston, Texas 77263-9901. Please be sure to specify whether you are requesting Official Rules or a winners list (available after winners are verified). Vermont residents may omit postage for Official Rules and the entry postcard.

5. **RESERVATIONS:** Each winner by acceptance of a prize agrees to release A.D. Vision, Inc., Newtype USA, Inc., Bandai Entertainment, AnimEigo, Central Park Media, ComicsOne, FUNimation Productions, Geneon Entertainment, TOKYOPOP Inc., or any of their parent entities, subsidiaries, affiliates, agencies, directors, officers, agents or employees from any and all liability, claims or actions of any kind whatsoever for any damage, loss or injury resulting from or arising out of participation in this Contest, the acceptance, use, misuse, possession, loss or misdirection of any prize, downloading or sending any Contest materials, or any typographical or other error in the printing, offering or announcement of any prize. Newtype USA reserves the right to cancel or suspend the Contest if the Contest becomes technically corrupted in any manner and to select winners by random drawing of all eligible entries received prior to the corruption. Any disputes arising from the meaning or interpretation of these Official Rules shall be resolved by applying United States law and be subject to all federal, state and local laws. Any and all legal actions or claims arising in connection with this Contest must be brought in a court of competent jurisdiction within the United States.

6. **PRIZES:** A: Two (2) autographs at \$10. B: Three (3) autographs at \$10. C: Five (5) DVD sets at \$30. D: One (1) set of production notes at \$10. E: Ten (10) CDs at \$15. F: Five (5) DVD sets at \$30. G: Five (5) DVDs at \$20. H: Five (5) graphic novels at \$10. I: Five (5) DVDs at \$10. The number of entries received determines the odds of winning. Sponsors reserve the right to substitute prizes of equal or greater value. Prizes are non-transferable, may not be redeemed for cash and may not be substituted by winner. All prizes will be awarded.

7. **YOU MUST ENTER TO WIN.** Fill out the entry card enclosed in this magazine and mail it back. Now. Go now. Do it now. Go.

Shôjo, Shonen & Then Some!

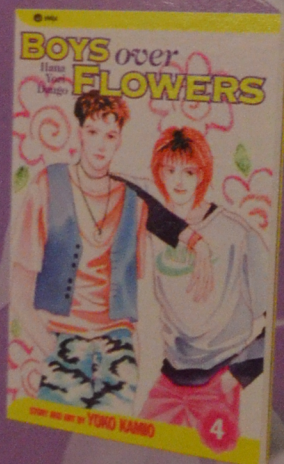
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A Thousand Words

Since our new editor in chief can't draw to save his life, he filled the final page with a heaping helping of text.

"I Don't Like Anime"

Once upon a time, in my former life as an editor for a video game magazine, I wrote those very words. And now I'm here.

Sacrilege! Ignominy! Disgrace and dishonor!

Before you start pelting me with all sorts of dangerous and destructive objects (the ones with those rusty nails poking out work best), understand this: Back then, I didn't actually dislike anime. In fact, I didn't know a whole heckuva lot about anime.

What I did know, though, is that anime fans were passionate, devoted—and fiercely protective when it came to their favorite form of entertainment. So protective, in fact, that a hardcore, exclusionary culture surrounded anime, making it difficult for a doltish n00b like me to even consider joining the legion of anime-lovers everywhere. I also knew that plenty of hardcore gamers used their anime knowledge to one-up the casual player, wielding their sacred wisdom against the unwitting (and, in their minds, witless) masses who lined up to play all that mediocre mainstream fare.

This (misguided) anime-bashing was just one point in an editorial I wrote titled "I Am Not Hardcore." My message: Lighten up. Learn to enjoy games for what they are. And stop trying to keep others from having fun.

As I said, I didn't really dislike anime—but I didn't like it either. Then, just over a year ago, something happened...and now, everything is different. I'm a dedicated fan, the kind of guy who'll spend far too much of my hard-earned cheddar just to get my daily fix of anime, manga and all those lovely plush toys.

So what spurred my turnaround? What caused me to eat my words and hightail it out of my cushy job as a video game editor in sunny California? What brought me out to the heat and humidity of Houston to head up the premier anime magazine in the US?

Three things: *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, *Chobits* and *.hack*.

An unlikely trio—even more so since it all started with that spiky-haired fella who, like me, has a hankering for games. Here's how it all went down...

Like *Pokémon* before it, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* was on the verge of busting out as a pop culture phenomenon, expanding from the original manga to an empire comprising TV shows, toys and, most important, video games. Thing is, no one on my former magazine had any knowledge of, or interest in, this particular license—but we had to cover it nonetheless. So it fell onto my plate to do a bit of research and write up a page on the lovable runt.

I had seen the cartoon on TV, I had contacted the game publisher for background info, I had rooted around on the Web, but it wasn't enough. That's when I stumbled on *Shonen Jump*.

Newly published in the US, *Shonen Jump* gave me a completely different perspective on *Yu-Gi-Oh!*. The serialized manga revealed a deeper, darker story than I expected, crackling with intricate schemes and elaborate revenge fantasies. Yes, this was aimed at kids, but it had more than enough grit to keep me interested.

But it wasn't just *Yu-Gi-Oh!* that caught my eye. *ONE PIECE*, *Shaman King*, *SandLand* and the other serialized manga had me hooked from the start. Sure, it was black-and-white, and the whole thing looked like a musty, old phonebook (keep in mind, I was weaned on pamphlet-thin but colorful American comics), but this was fun, lively stuff. Thanks to *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, I developed a voracious appetite for manga. Soon enough, I found myself at my local bookstore, browsing through shelf after shelf of magnificent manga. I couldn't get enough.

Enter *Chobits*. Somewhere between love and madness lies a Persocom named Chi. Thanks to a random selection off the manga rack, my interest in Japanese pop entertainment graduated from active

awareness to outright obsession. There's something about CLAMP's storytelling and art that can make even a hardened, jaded cynic like me weak at the knees. I was in love. (Think I'm exaggerating? Just check out my ever-so-manly collection of *Chobits* plushies that I bought on eBay.)

Ah, I can hear you now. "But, Gary, this is all about manga! What about, y'know, anime. This is the 'Moving Pictures Magazine' after all!"

I'm one step ahead of you, Bright Eyes. See, right around this time, *.hack* was also emerging as a multimedia phenomenon, with a four-part PS2 RPG at the center of it all. Being the role-playing maven that I am, I immediately dove in, whipping up previews, reviews, strategies and other feature coverage for my former magazine. Naturally, you can't cover *.hack* without covering the anime, both the packed-in OVA and the standalone TV series. So I called up Bandai, got my hands on some screeners, and...wow!

What an eye-opener. This was thoughtful stuff. Slow-paced, intricately plotted stuff. Mind-bending, brain-busting stuff. This was everything I thought anime wasn't. From there I turned to *Noir*, simply because I shared some of the same creative crew, and I was once again impressed. After *Noir*, the deluge. My mind was opened.

Which brings me here. For the past year, I've immersed myself in all things anime and manga, and I've loved every second of it. So when I had the chance to work for Newtype USA, I immediately packed my bags and hopped onto the first plane to Houston—and never looked back.

Meanwhile, these days I can still comfortably say that "I don't like anime," but it's for a whole different reason. I love it.

Just one request for all you super hardcore folks out there: Go easy on a n00b like me!

—GARY STEINMAN

NEXT MONTH

Take three magical hotties, toss in one young fella with some rather remarkable DNA, and you've got the formula for a fantastically funny anime titled *Maburaho*. After you're done with our cover story, you can luxuriate in our detailed look at some of the newest anime series coming out of Japan. Plus: a special ten-page feature on the hottest video games, including *Final Fantasy XII*, *Shadow Hearts II* and *FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST*!

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